DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 517 CG 021 677

TITLE Planning for State Solutions to the Problems of Youth at Risk. Final Report Fall 1988. Bulletin No. 9244.

INSTITUTION Wisconsin State Dept. of Public Instruction, Madison.

PUB DATE Jan 89

NOTE 103p.; Includes proceedings of a conference, "Wisconsin's Children at Risk: Moving a Children's Agenda Forward" (Madison, WI, May 8-10, 1988).

PUB TYPE Reports - General (140) -- Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Agency Cooperation; *Childhood Needs; Children; Elementary Secondary Education; *High Risk Persons; Models; *State Action; State Agencies; *Statewide Planning

IDENTIFIERS *Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

The introduction to this document proposes that the most effective response to the needs of at risk youth is collaboration between the reform efforts in education, human services, and employment and training initiatives. It discusses the goals of a project undertaken by the state of Wisconsin to draft policy recommendations reflecting such a collaborative effort, identify a model to serve at risk youth, and integrate research information to improve intervention strategies when working with this population. Six tasks undertaken to achieve these goals are described, including the establishment of an interagency council at the state level; the creation of the paper "Wisconsin's Statute, Administrative Rules and the CCSSO Model Statute;" recommendations of the interagency advisory council; and a meeting with Children at Risk coordinators. Components of the interagency collaboration to serve at risk youth are discussed. The remainder of the paper contains the proceedings of Wisconsin's Children at Risk Conference held in May, 1988. Included are welcome and closing remarks by Victor Contrucci, Assistant Superintendent of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and these papers: (1) "Children at Risk in Wisconsin" (June Pery); (2) "An Agenda for Children-Analyzing the Past and Shaping the Future" (Herbert Grover); (3) "Responding Effectively to Children at Risk" (Gary Wehlage); (4) "Children in Need--The Report of the Committee on Economic Development" (Donna Shalala); (5) "The Council of Chief State School Officers' Model Statute for Serving Children at Risk" (Cynthia Brown); and (6) "What Should Wisconsin's Dream Be?" (Susan Phillips). The Children at Risk Status is appended. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 307 517

CG

PLANNING FOR

State Solutions

TO THE PROBLEMS OF

Youth at Risk

Final Report
Fall 1988

CG 021677

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. S. Hartmaker

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction / Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Planning For State Solutions To The Problems of Youth At Risk

Final Report

Fall 1988

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Herbert Grover, State Superintendent

This publication is available from:

Division for Handicapped Children and Pupil Services
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Bulletin No. 9244

January, 1989

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Major Contributions of This Project	3
Wisconsin's Statute, Administrative Rules and the CCSSO Model Statute: A Comparative Analysis	5
Recommendations of the Interagency Advisory Council	12
Children At Risk Coordinators Invitational Meeting – February 15, 1988	16
Components of Interagency Collaboration to Serve At Risk Youth	26
Conference Proceedings: Wisconsin's Children At Risk Moving a Children's Agenda Forward	39
Welcome, Victor Contrucci	41
Children At Risk in Wisconsin June Perry	43
An Agenda for Children—Analyzing the Past and Shaping the Future Herbert Grover, State Superintendent	50
Responding Effectively to Children At Risk Gary Wehlage	56
Children in Need Report Donna E. Shalala	63
An Audience Discussion	68
The Council of Chief State School Officers' Model Statute for Serving Children At Risk Cynthia G. Brown	68
What Should Wisconsins' Dream Be? Susan Phillips	75
Group Reports	83
Closing—What Will Our Next Steps Be? Victor Contrucci	94
Appendix Children At Risk State Statute	97

Introduction

The American dream is fading for thousands of America's youth. They are at risk of school, occupational, social and personal failure. What can be done? Research indicates that the most effective response to the needs of at risk youth is **collaboration** between the reform efforts in education, human services and employment and training initiatives. This conclusion has been documented by the CCSSO's National Survey, the National Governors' Association Task Force Report, *Bringing Down the Barriers*, and the Committee for Economic Development's Report, *Children in Need*. The overriding call is for a coordinated effort by national, state and local agencies to plan and promote collaborative services and programs which guarantee that the health, social and educational needs of children and youth at risk of failure will be met.

Michigan, along with other states, has recognized that agencies that work together to solve problems are much more successful than those that work independently. The various state agencies, community based organizations and school districts bring together a variety of strengths. When these strengths are pooled, the potential for success is strengthened.

The State of Wisconsin was one of four states to receive a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation to jointly develop coordinated state policy with the governor, legislature, Chief State School Officer, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and the State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.

The goals of the Wisconsin project were:

- **Draft policy recommendations reflecting a government, school, community, business, labor and industry collaborative effort to serve children at risk of school, career and personal failure,**
- **Identify a model for school and community interaction and collaboration to serve children at risk, and**
- **Integrate research information from various state agencies and policymakers in order to improve our intervention strategies with at risk youth at the state and local levels in Wisconsin.**

To complete these goals, the following tasks were completed.

Task 1.1 Established an interagency advisory council including representatives from the following state agencies: Governor's office, legislature, education, labor, industry, and health and social services. Included were experts who currently serve children at risk roles in their respective agencies.

Task 1.2 Generated policy recommendations through the interagency council based on current research and successful practices (See Appendix, Wisconsin's Statute, Administrative Rules and the CCSSO Model Statute which includes Recommendations of the Interagency Council (February 1988).

Task 2.1 Identified program managers and operators in the State of Wisconsin who use an interagency approach for delivering services to at risk youth.

Task 2.2 Gathered information from state experts to identify components in their program which lead to successful collaborative interventions with at risk youth.

Task 3.1 Met with nine coordinators and staff people who work with the current children at risk legislation through the schools to better understand how the schools implement the Wisconsin Statute.

Task 3.2 Coordinated a statewide conference on Wisconsin's Children At Risk in May 1988 in order to address alternative policy directions for the children's agenda which might include integrated prevention, parental involvement, and interagency approaches to provide services.

While the State of Wisconsin has many pieces of the puzzle in place, we still need to examine our experiences with Wisconsin's Children At Risk legislation and develop policy recommendations which will move forward a broader children's agenda that addresses educational and developmental needs of our youth. The activities of this project have moved us closer to this goal.

Major Contributions of This Project

#1 An interagency council was established at the state level which met regularly and discussed the multiple problems of at risk youth in the state of Wisconsin and the role of the state system and local services in resolving the problems of our youth.

Of particular note was a paper developed by this interagency council discussing recommendations for broadening our attack on the problems of children at risk in the schools, in their families, in the community, and at the workplace. The paper contains a discussion of the issues associated with the Children At Risk legislative initiative. The issues are discussed the way they are defined in Wisconsin's current legislation and in a model statute developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). By presenting the issues as they compare and contrast, the council was able to creatively develop alternative approaches for a new look at our public policy around this topic. One critical component of the endeavor was to identify promising areas for collaboration and cooperation between the agencies and offices represented on the interagency committee. The issues included in the paper are:

- Philosophy Statement
- The Definition of "Children At Risk"
- How to Provide for Children At Risk
- Funding Programs for Children At Risk

Council Members

Jeff Bartzen
Governor's Office

Joseph Czarnezki
State Senate

William J. Erpenbach
Department of Public Instruction

Joyce Hawthorne
Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations

Tom Kaplan
Health and Social Services

Linda Kunelius
Department of Public Instruction

Jim Mueller
State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education

Barbara Notestein
State Assembly

Wayne Sherry
Department of Public Instruction

Mary Thompson
Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations

Staff

Judy Rodenstein
Department of Public Instruction and the University of Wisconsin

Dennis Van Den Heuvel
Department of Public Instruction

#2 A statewide meeting was scheduled for those who manage programs which use an interagency collaborative approach to working with children at risk. At the meeting and in a formal survey, these experts discussed components they believe must be included in any successful collaboration which serves these youth.

#3 A state conference was held for those who work with children at risk in a variety of ways. They helped define what "Wisconsin's dream" should be. After a number of formal presentations which helped the audience learn what others in the country are doing to resolve the problems of our youth, participants were assigned to work groups to complete a two-part task. The first task was to prioritize a list of twelve recommendations regarding policy for children at risk in Wisconsin. The second task involved identifying policy implications of these three recommendations. The work group plans were presented to a panel of experts at the end of the conference. They will be seriously considered as the state agencies begin to develop the second generation of public policy around children at risk.

#4 A videotape of the conference highlights will be used for inservice programs around the topic of, "Serving Children At Risk in Wisconsin Schools."

Wisconsin's Statute, Administrative Rules and the CCSSO Model Statute

A Comparative Analysis

Introduction

This paper discusses many issues associated with the Children At Risk legislative initiative. The issues are discussed the way they are defined in Wisconsin's current legislation and in the model statute developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The Chief's model statute is not an appropriations statute but a declaration of policy about school and student rights, responsibilities, and expectations. By presenting the issues as they compare and contrast in these two different policy statements, we hope to approach the 1988-89 legislative challenge in a way that stimulates intellectual curiosity and creativity. There are many issues contained in the revised legislation. They are intertwined and impinge upon each other. For the sake of discussion, however, we have broken down these issues into categories and will try to examine the alternative ways they can be expressed category by category.

One critical component of this endeavor is to identify promising areas for **cooperation and collaboration** by the agencies and offices represented on our interagency committee. The hope is that we will be able to develop a plan based on **interagency cooperation for serving at risk youth**. "We can multiply the odds for success by forming partnerships with other institutions and more effectively focusing services." (Phyllis Blaunstein, National Association of School Boards National Director)

ISSUE #1: Philosophy

Wisconsin – Although it is not solely the school's responsibility to alleviate the many social conditions that put children's education and well-being at risk, school programs and staff efforts are necessary to help children cope with health and social stresses that impair their ability to learn, progress through school, and graduate. The Department of Public Instruction has taken on the responsibility within the current legislation to deliver services to these students. It has designated the school board as the responsible party for developing a plan to meet the needs. This concept of local control, with a statewide agency providing direction and guidance, is the process used in Wisconsin. Local school boards are expected to include community support services in the plan. They can use the available services in the community but do not need to integrate the services of local agencies. The intent of the legislation is to keep students in school who might otherwise drop out. Specific standards and practices which have proven successful in keeping students in school have not been included in the legislation but are at the discretion of the local school board.

As a result of the Department of Public Instruction's initiative, a variety of programs are available to help districts serve Children At Risk. In addition, the DPI is prepared to provide assistance or grant support for programs dealing with school-age parents and suicide prevention—all of which have particular relevance to Children At Risk. The legislation is based on the philosophy that the school is the best place to reach youth and the school board has the ability to develop programs for them.

CCSSO Model – **Whole Child Approach** – This statute is based on providing a cohesive program of education, social, health, and career services which result in an interagency approach to Children At Risk. The Chiefs also include a strong emphasis on parental involvement in both planning and service delivery.

The model statute introduces this legislative initiative by putting strong emphasis on facts that give rise to the concern about **children left behind** in the public school system. This sets the tone for

what follows. The focus is not on an end product, although successful completion of high school is the goal. Instead, **the legislation spells out the educational and related services necessary to reach that goal.**

The introduction also states the legislative objective; **to provide each child with educational and related services to enable that child to complete high school successfully and to become a productive and responsible citizen.** Note that the broad entitlement is for all children at risk of educational failure.

This introduction provides a means for the sponsors of a bill to state the case in compelling terms that will motivate the legislators to act on the problem.

COMMENTS: The focus of these two legislative initiatives are very different. In Wisconsin, the focus is school based and emphasizes local control by school boards. In the Chief's model statute, the focus is on interagency collaboration and integration of services to serve children at risk. The task is to attempt to integrate that philosophy into the legislation which governs children at risk programs.

ISSUE #2: The Definition

Wisconsin, "Children At Risk" refers to dropouts, pupils that have been absent from school without acceptable excuses, pupils who are parents or pupils who have been adjudicated delinquent, who are also one or more years behind their age group in the number of credits attained or in basic skill levels (i.e., reading or math). The administrative rules clarified the definition of "age group" to mean "age or grade level group" to accommodate situations in which a pupil may have repeated a grade and would be consistently behind his or her age level peers, as well as to clarify cases where a pupil begins school at a later age but keeps up with grade level peers (e.g., seven years old when starting first grade).

Math and reading are the two areas of basic skills measured to determine a district's eligibility for additional aid. Therefore, the department felt it was appropriate to use these two basic skills areas to identify the children.

To clarify how long a child remains at risk, the State of Wisconsin has determined that if a child is, or has ever been, a dropout, truant, school age parent, or adjudicated delinquent, and otherwise meets the full definition, the child remains at risk as long as he or she is behind age or grade level peers.

CCSSO has adapted several definitions of Children At Risk for students in 1) **a child development program** and 2) **K–12**. The definition differs depending on the age of the student. For the **child development program**, the child will be considered at risk of school failure if he or she is a member of a household or family whose income is at or below the poverty level or is unable to speak or comprehend the English language. The child can participate if he or she will reach the third or fourth birthday during the school year in which the program is offered.

In **K–3,** children are at risk if they are a member of a household or family whose income is at or below the poverty level, has not made substantial progress in mastering basic skills appropriate for students of his or her age, or has been determined to be at risk by the school principal because of health, social, or family problems.

In grades **4–12,** students are defined as at risk if they score lower than the level of performance set by the state which shows adequate progress and the expectation of completing high school successfully. In those states using statewide norm-referenced examinations, the students need to score lower than a standard performance established by the state, **or** fail to complete a statewide competency examination, been a school dropout, **or** has 20 or more unexcused absences during a calendar year, **or** has been

determined at risk by the principal due to health, social or family problems such as abuse, alcohol or drugs, pregnancy, delinquent behavior or attempted suicide.

COMMENTS: The State of Wisconsin has one standard definition for all children at risk. CCSSO uses a three-tier system with different standards for three to four-year-olds, K–3, and students from grades 4–12. For the two youngest groups, family poverty is a primary standard in addition to educational readiness expressed in different ways, from predicted deficiency to failure to master basic skills. A third criteria is lack of participation in school measured by unexcused absences or being a dropout. The fourth and final criterion is a discretionary determination.

The State of Wisconsin refers to Children At Risk as those who are not mastering basic skills at the levels of their age or grade level peers and those that fit into certain categories including dropouts, students with attendance problems, those who are parents, or adjudicated delinquents. This definition is based on conditions of the student both in and out of school.

One alternative approach is to change the ways we identify children at risk. For example, more attention could be focused on school attendance or performance criteria which clearly relate to the goal of the legislation, i.e., receiving credit sufficient to advance to the next grade level.

The definition from the CCSSO model statute, on the other hand, is a generic, process-oriented approach which does not isolate and specify particular conditions and does not expect any educator to come up with an exhaustive list of conditions for identification that will hold true over time. The model statute believes the system for identification needs to be flexible enough to accommodate local needs, yet broad enough to seriously consider the discretionary determinations made by the principal.

ISSUE #3: How to Provide for Children At Risk

Wisconsin – 1985 Wisconsin Act 29 created s. 118.153 Wis. Stats. which defines Children At Risk and requires every school board to annually identify such children and develop a plan for programs to meet their needs. In their plans, school boards must establish procedures for identifying Children At Risk and describe how their needs will be met through curriculum modifications, alternative programs, remedial instruction, parental involvement, pupil support services, community support service programs, education for employment programs, and other approaches that have been successful in meeting the needs of children at risk.

School districts that had 50 or more dropouts or a high school dropout rate exceeding five percent in the previous school year must have their plans approved by the state superintendent. They must then submit an annual report detailing attendance, retention, and high school graduation rates for pupils enrolled in the children at risk program, and the percentage of those pupils who received academic credit during the school year.

The intent of the legislation is to keep pupils in school who might otherwise drop out and enable them to graduate from high school. Districts required to have their plans approved may receive additional state aids for their children at risk programs if their annual reports reveal that three of the following conditions are met:

- The average attendance rate of pupils in the program was at least 70 percent.
- The retention rate of pupils enrolled in the program was at least 70 percent.
- At least 70 percent of the pupils enrolled in the program earned credits sufficient to advance to the next grade level or to graduate from high school.

- Pupils in the Children At Risk program can show as a group at least one month of improvement in reading and mathematics performance for each month of instruction.

Finally, the statute specifies the information to be included in the annual report and requires that the additional funds, which eligible districts could receive, be used for programs and services to meet the needs of children at risk.

CCSSO Model Statute – The focus of the model statute is not on funding but on **entitlement**.

Participation

Children from preschool through high school are involved in this model statute. Therefore, a variety of services must be made available for each age group. According to this model, each school district shall make available a child development program for children deemed at risk of school failure to all qualified pre-school children within its jurisdiction. The program should last at least one-half day to prepare for successful participation in public schools.

Preschoolers would be eligible to participate if they were a member of a family whose income was at or below the poverty level or unable to speak or comprehend the English language. Children reaching their third or fourth birthday in the school year would be eligible.

It is important to note that the obligation is on the school district to make available a program. It can fulfill its obligation by providing the service within a district building or by contracting with a private agency. The focus would be on readiness, not day care. Eligibility could be assessed on predicted failure, poverty or a statewide testing program for three- to four-year-olds. Other eligibility characteristics could be added to the list.

Standards

The basic components of an effective education program should be identified in the statute so that they can be enforced.

Within the preschool program, standards should be set for the curriculum, involvement of parents, child to staff ratios, appointment and inservice training of teachers, student access to the program, transportation costs, and coordination with other public and private human services agencies. The standards in the schools are defined as "promising practices." It should be noted that the CCSSO model emphasizes standards, not whether the program is held in a school or a private agency. According to the authors of the CCSSO model statute, they should include the following:

- certified trained staff;
- systematic instructional strategies demonstrated to be effective, are designed for at risk children, and are designed to accommodate coordination of efforts which assist at risk children with the entire educational program;
- use of appropriate and up-to-date text books;
- facilities that are clean and safe;
- involvement of parents;
- system that encourages goal setting at each school and encourages innovations within the broad limits of the statutes.

Entitlement

Entitlement means that **each student enrolled in a school operated by a local education agency is entitled to be provided with educational and related services which will lead them to successful completion of a high school education**. (This is the same conclusion specified by the Wisconsin statute, but the provision of services in the CCSSO model begins in the 3–4 year old child development program.) If, however, the school fails to meet the criteria, which define "an environment for successful education," the student shall be entitled to transfer to a school where such an environment exists. The objective of the statute is not choice; the objective is student/school success. If a successful school is not available within the student's district, the statute provides for interdistrict transfers.

According to the statute, educators should identify dropouts, get them back to school, and provide an education which will lead to high school graduation. This model argues that we should turn the situation around. The school needs to take the leadership role.

The concept of entitlement goes further than the Wisconsin statute by specifying entitlement of young people <u>not in school</u>. The definition in the CCSSO model statute specifies that all citizens need to be included in the Children At Risk plan who are under the age of 21 and have not successfully completed high school or are no longer enrolled in school. These students are entitled to re-enroll in the public schools. The responsibilities of the local school district, and the state educational agencies should be outlined within the statute.

Guidelines on the content and structure of the programs, technical assistance to establish alternative schools, and revisions in funding formulas to assure reimbursement for costs of educating the students, monitoring, and evaluation should be included in the statute. The CCSSO model sets broad limits yet is specific enough in its statement of minimal standards to enable enforcement of the statute. Not only is the role of education programs specified but also the emphasis on **coordination** with other public and private human service and employment agencies.

Mandated Assessments and Services

Local Education Agencies are required to identify the students and provide promising educational practices, provide access to a successful school environment for the program, and develop an Individualized Teaching and Learning Plan (ITLP) for each student's needs so that problems are identified and redressed as systemic problems both in and out of the school.

Unlike the Wisconsin statute, the model statute gets very specific about the Individual Teaching and Learning Plan and School-Wide Plans. The ITLP's should contain: 1) an assessment of the current educational performance of the student and aspects of that performance which place the student at risk, 2) a brief description of the instructional strategies and educational services that will be implemented, 3) an identification of related health, nutritional or other social services needed by the student, and 4) the agency(ies) that will provide the services. The Children At Risk statute in Wisconsin established minimum requirements for school boards to contract with private, nonprofit, nonsectarian agencies.

The purpose of the ITLP is to establish a <u>process</u> rather than a program which draws attention to the specific individual and the factors which place this student at risk. It guarantees that relevant questions will be asked and practical measures adopted. The ITLP's should not be boilerplates and mere paperwork. These plans should be written to emphasize that the school is not necessarily responsible for correcting all problems outside the school, but needs to identify services that can be used to meet the student's needs whether in or out of school. According to the CCSSO model statute, these

plans would be reviewed by a teacher or other staff member with the student and parents to evaluate progress.

The school-wide plans should identify promising practices and detail the means used to implement these practices in the school. Progress should also be evaluated and deficiencies identified. Copies of the plan should be made available to teachers, staff and parents.

The model statute encourages the authors of the legislation to define the components of school-wide plans. The list represents common sense in education but the authors of the model statute believe they need to be written into the statute in order to become enforceable. Therefore, whoever drafts the legislation needs to carefully define what, for example, is meant by an "environment for successful education." The philosophy of the Chiefs leads one to believe that they want to spell out their meaning with broad parameters to allow for the expression of local needs and room for creativity when working with these children.

Implementation and Enforcement of the Statute

The model statute also specifies, as does the Wisconsin statute, that the implementation of the statute be done in stages.

The model statute also contains language which details private party complaints by those who feel the system failed them. Administrative remedies are preferred to court actions. This section is designed to make the process of state law available to effectively monitor the guarantees of the model statute.

COMMENTS: The CCSSO model statute goes further in providing services to a group of children who represent a large portion of the under 21 population. In many instances the language in the Wisconsin statute is not as strong in the CCSSO model. As a result, the districts do not need to "offer" the children in their district the available resources, they only need to make them available. That is an easy way for a district to escape the responsibility to serve.

The model statute also emphasizes the involvement of the community and other agencies although not to the extent that we wish to do in Wisconsin. Neither statute goes far enough in describing <u>how</u> parental involvement, human services, business, and industry can contribute to solving the many problems that Children At Risk face in school, in their homes and in the community.

ISSUE #4: Funding Programs

<u>Wisconsin</u> – If upon receipt of an annual report, the State Superintendent determines that any of the three following conditions existed in a school district in the pervious school year, the school district shall receive (from the appropriations under s.20.255 for each student enrolled in the district's program for children at risk) additional state aid in an amount equal to 10 percent of the school district's average per pupil aids provided in the previous school year. Conditions include:

- attendance rate in Children At Risk program was at least 70 percent;
- retention rate was at least 70 percent;
- at least 70 percent of the enrollees received a high school diploma;
- at least 70 percent of the students received academic credit;

- the program can show at least one month of improvement in reading and math performance for each month of instruction for the group.

These funds must be used for meeting requirements of the children at risk statute. In conclusion, there is a reminder in the Wisconsin statute that the administrative rules should not be overly restrictive and should demonstrate success in meeting the needs of the children at risk.

CCSSO - The first time money is mentioned in this initiative is in the provision of services to citizens under the age of 21 who have not completed high school. Initial funding would be based on the number of at risk children in each local area. Subsequent funding would be in the form of incentives and rewards for making measurable progress. The chiefs do not believe that funding for categorical purposes should be encouraged except in the area of professional staff development.

The CCSSO has circulated a paper describing "Strategies for Financing State Dropout Programs." The issues discussed in that paper are summarized in this packet of information.

COMMENTS: Funding not only needs to support the planning of programs for at risk children, but it also needs to be used as a meaningful incentive for districts to maintain low dropout rates and simultaneously address the needs of children at risk from preschool through the age of 21. The awarding of funds should be contingent upon demonstrated success in programs which achieve the goals of the legislation, i.e., improved attendance and achievement by pupils enrolled in the program, which in turn leads to high school graduation.

Recommendations Of The Interagency Advisory Council

The subcommittee of the Interagency Advisory Council has recommended the following policy changes in Statute 118.153, the Children At Risk (CAR) statute. These recommendations were generated through examination of the current Wisconsin statute and the model statute developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Members of the subcommittee include:

Joyce Hawthorne, DILHR
Jim Mueller, SBVTAE
Judy Rodenstein, DPI
Wayne Sherry, DPI
Dutch Van Den Heuvel, DPI

Our discussion centered upon four major issues:

- philosophy
- the definition
- how to provide services
- funding

One critical component of this endeavor has been to identify promising areas for **cooperation and collaboration** by the agencies and offices represented on this committee. The hope is that we will be able to develop a plan based on interagency cooperation for serving at risk youth.

ISSUE #1: Philosophy

Committee Recommendations – The committee agreed that the school should be given responsibility for serving these children but should do so through the role of "lead agency" in collaboration with the other local social service, employment and training and community service agencies. The philosophy needs to be educationally based but reach outside the school walls for appropriate resources in order to be successful.

The basic philosophy of this legislation is that the high school diploma along with "economic independence" is the goal of providing special services to children who are at risk of dropping out of school.

The legislation should include the basic philosophy statement that school is for all youth. The primary mission of the legislation is to ensure that all youth be given the opportunity to succeed. The committee strongly recommends that this assumption of responsibility be mandated, and it should also mandate that schools and local agencies be required to work together. The first choice of delivery should be the schools. The schools should also be responsible for a degree of quality control insured through the legislation. All agencies need to offer a guarantee that the school is the lead agency, but all agencies are held accountable. Today, not just the schools are failing, we are all failing together. The legislation needs to change that trend.

ISSUE #2: The Definition

Committee Recommendations – If the high school diploma is one goal of the legislation, then it follows that school attendance and achievement should be a major component of the definition. The definition, though, should not be as narrow as that stated in the current legislation. The Wisconsin statute has been implemented in high school but not in preschool, elementary school, or middle/junior

high school. There is a need for an academically-based definition for all students aged (3-21) that will result in early identification and preventative programming. The prevention component should be in the definition so that all schools would be required to provide early childhood programs.

The committee wants to keep the part of the Wisconsin definition which refers to a "deficiency in academic achievement or in credits." It gets to the broad group of students who are defined by academic criteria. This part of the definition recognizes other factors than those traditionally associated with dropouts; those which also contribute to "being at risk." A broad generic definition was rejected as unmanageable. If the legislation gets too broad, it loses its impact.

One committee member added that the degree of being at risk should be consistent with the number of required school days and contact hours in order to offer the local school district board and administrators the most potent criteria to serve children becoming at risk of school failure.

The parameters in the current legislation are not clear on who the true dropouts are and how many there are. It is only those who have officially dropped out that are in the count. The non-attenders count is an unknown number. The legislation needs to correct that omission.

In summary, the definition should be far-reaching and reflect the philosophy stated in the beginning of the statute. For example, if the philosophy is helping students succeed in school, then the definition should include the criteria which define success in school from ages 3-21.

ISSUE #3: How to Provide for Children At Risk

Committee Recommendations – Because of the language in the Wisconsin statute, the districts escape responsibility to serve these children through the "make available" clause. The district should be required to "offer and make available" programs suited to children's needs. This would result in a more direct mandate to the districts to actively provide appropriate programs.

Schools are not expected to be all things to all people. They have their hands full dealing with attendance and achievement but they do need to guarantee that they will do this effectively and coordinate and lead in serving these children in nonacademic areas.

Who Should Be Served? – The statute should be broadened to reach all at risk kids whether they are 3 or 21. Whoever is at risk in the district should be served.

The committee recommends that the extent of the services provided vis a vis entitlement should be dictated by each student's needs. This means schools need to supply or coordinate what it takes to reach the goal of obtaining a high school diploma. The schools are legally and morally responsible for all youth.

Standards – The quality control issue lies with the school. The exact services should be dictated by the standards established in the statute.

The standards included in the legislation should be stated strongly enough to enforce the legislation but not in a way that is restrictive or generic. Many of the standards are already stated in other statutes and documents. The standards in this legislation should include requiring annual staff development and inservice (for all staff) to help them work with children at risk. A standard should also be included requiring systematic instructional strategies demonstrated to be effective. Another standard would be involvement of parents in planning, service delivery, and evaluation.

Who Should Take Responsibility? – The committee wants to be sure that as services are provided either in the school, through a subcontract, or through a separate school district administered program, that these students are not segregated from the other students in their school. The statute

needs to require integration of programming into the regular curriculum. Except for those students who are threats to the safety of others (language from the truancy legislation), it will be the responsibility of the regular teachers (with additional support services) to see that these kids make it.

If students are sent to an alternative setting, the legislation needs to guarantee that one of the goals is to eventually have the student back in the regular classroom. An individualized plan could be developed for any student served in a separate program.

Should the legislation become due process such as the handicapped legislation? NO.

Should all those eligible receive services till age 21? YES.

Should the school be the lead agency coordinating services? YES. In addition, it should be clearly indicated in the legislation that parallel systems should not be developed by others in the community.

Should each student receive an individual plan? NO, although a plan should follow the student if (s)he leaves the school for an alternative educational program to ensure that they will be reintegrated into the regular curriculum as soon as possible.

Planning – In order to emphasize the seriousness of the needs of children at risk, all districts should submit an at risk plan once to guarantee that a plan does exist in each district for those students who need it, no matter what the percentage of dropouts.

The plans should be community-wide with the school as the leader. With this type of orientation, we could piggyback onto the community-wide committees developed by the truancy statute with the addition of an employment and training person on the committee. This committee, with the school as the leader, could oversee the provision of services.

Assessment – The identification of students for services should be handled through required competency testing. Testing should be completed during 3rd, 8th, and 10th grades with minimum requirements for third grade to indicate the child's "at risk" level. Students would be considered at risk if they were one year behind grade level. At age 14, a vocational assessment would need to be completed. It would be required if students had more than 20 unexcused absences and were academically behind one grade level. This assessment is mandated in the Carl Perkins Act.

The committee believes that another way to add strength to the legislation would be to require schools to coordinate at risk plans with JTPA. The PIC is already required to coordinate with the schools. Requiring coordination by the schools could serve to strengthen this link.

ISSUE #4: Funding

Committee Recommendations – There should be meaningful financial incentives for districts to maintain low dropout rates and simultaneously address the needs of children at risk (preschool through age 21). The awarding of additional monies would be contingent upon the district providing evidence that children at risk were adequately served as demonstrated through improved school attendance and achievement. The current legislation is a fiscal disincentive program. Districts who do an outstanding job of serving at risk students are excluded from continued funding to maintain their effort.

Because of the philosophy stated in the proposed legislative changes, districts should also be rewarded for linking the school, community, business, labor and human services in meeting the needs of children at risk.

Categorical aid should only be used for certain types of support but not as the entire financial base of the program. In actuality, the price is too big to be supported. Each school needs to put a program in

place or make their school more flexible so that they can creatively use services already in the school to better serve children at risk.

A suggested alternative would be to fund a children at risk coordinator/resource person in each CESA who would also coordinate the Perkins plans, JTPA dollars, and other community resources. Not only would all districts feel they had even access to the dollars but we could achieve our goal of coordination through this one position.

Children At Risk Coordinators

Invitational Meeting

February 15, 1988

One of the goals of the project was to examine the strengths and shortcomings of the current Children At Risk Statute. During this meeting, the Department of Public Instruction documented the experiences of educators who had implemented the statute in their districts. The focus was on the strengths and weaknesses of the statute in its implementation phase.

A meeting was held with Children At Risk staff members representing of seven school districts. The following transcript is a record of that meeting.

Meeting Summary

Chairperson:	Victor Contrucci Assistant Superintendent DPI - DHCPS
Participants:	William J. Erpenbach, DPI Linda Kunelius, DPI Dennis Van Den Heuvel, DPI Judy Rodenstein, DPI
Children At Risk Coordinators:	Linda Nortier, Beloit Nancy Gurrie, Beloit Steve LaVallee, Adams-Friendship Tom Zulke, Kenosha Cal Stone, Madison Dave Furrer, Oconomowoc Albert Pitts, Racine Randy Hanson, Racine James Haessly, Waukesha

Purpose

Coordinators were invited to discuss their experience in implementing Wisconsin's Children At Risk Legislation as well as provide suggestions for policy amendments.

Discussion Summary

Issue #1: Parent/Child At Risk Response

Response of identified children and their parents to services offered was minimal. Coordinators reported less than a 10 percent return from identified students and their parents. This necessitated active recruitment of students already enrolled in children at risk programs in order to continue serving them under the statutory requirements. Approximately 80 percent of identified students were already enrolled in district children at risk programs/activities.

Issue #2: Paperwork and Recordkeeping Burden

Coordinators reported that fiscal reimbursements for services offered were insufficient to cover staff costs for recordkeeping and program monitoring. A systematic pupil accounting format is necessary districtwide and statewide to monitor programs and individual students.

Issue #3: Lack of Funding for Existing District Sponsored Successful Programs

Most districts already have a number of programs to meet the high school age children at risk. The added reporting burden to meet the statutory requirements detracts from staff time to administer existing programs (e.g., Madison invests over $1,000,000 annually in alternative programs to serve such children and receives only $1,164 to accommodate the statutory requirements).

Issue #4: Statutory Definition

The definition fails to acknowledge the needs of children in grades K-8. We know that prevention is more economical than intervention, however, the current definition gives us no leverage to promote prevention programming. In fact, meeting the current requirements steals staff from attempts to promote preventative programs. Legislators need to address child at risk prevention. Each school district should be able to determine identification procedures, which might include teacher surveys.

Issue #5: Interagency Collaboration Versus Pupil Records

Some districts have interagency committees. Pupil records laws do not permit sharing of case information so that joint intervention might occur. Legislation is needed which permits exchange of information to enable staff to work together with children and families.

Issue #6: Definitions Of Excused Versus Unexcused Absence

Absenteeism precipitates at risk levels. Current truancy laws do not give sufficient discretion to determine extent of absenteeism, excused or unexcused, relative to placing children at risk. Parents do not cooperate to reduce absenteeism. Furthermore, tracking pupil attendance is a nightmare in schools where there is high student/family mobility rates (e.g., an elementary school that has had a 100 percent student turnover in one year). Beloit has attempted to set thresholds on the number of absences for child at risk identification.

Issue #7: Confusion About Dropout Definitions

It is difficult to classify children as dropouts when there are conflicting definitions in state reporting. Confusion in dropout counting among neighboring districts promotes negative public relations. Oftentimes the same student is counted as a dropout more than once in the same district or in neighboring districts.

Issue #8: Identification Of Adjudicated Delinquents

Current law does not allow school access to information which identifies adjudicated delinquents. Some judges provide the information; others do not. When a district serves as many as three counties, mixed messages create recordkeeping problems.

Issue #9: Performance Criteria In The Statute

The statute makes the assumption that a district could accurately measure children across all of the performance criteria. In fact, this is not possible. Accurate measures can be achieved for only four of the five performance criteria.

Issue #10: Cost Effectiveness Versus Incentive

Meeting the statutory requirements is not cost effective relative to the needs of the target population. Furthermore, if the district does a good job, funding is cutback.

Issue #11: Benefit Of The Statute

For the first time, districts have a program identity around which to build coordinated services for the target population. The statutory requirement has created an opportunity to begin work together. It formalizes program needs for staff, school boards, parents, and community members.

Issue #12: Parent/Child Signatures

This is worthless. These are the types of parents and children who spend their time avoiding school. If the child meets the definition, we should be able to enroll and serve to meet his/her needs.

Issue #13: One Among Twenty Standards

Our district staff is too overloaded now to take on new mandates. There is not additional staff or monies to run these programs. It amounts to another job for already overloaded staff. Funding needs to provide ways to reallocate staff.

Issue #14: The Legislation Stimulated Collaboration

The fact is that the legislation stimulated collaboration between county human services, schools, and law enforcement agencies.

Issue #15: Publication Of Successful Programs

There is a lot of good work in children at risk programs but it is not being shared very well. We could use some program sharing conferences. We should also visit other states to look at their policies.

Issue #16: Parenting and Parent Education

We need support for parent education programs to help parents be partners with the school in their children's success.

Issue #17: A Consistent Service Package For Kids

We need a "consistent service package" for kids which includes a level of service from counselors, social workers, and school psychologists in all districts.

Issue #18: Paper Program

This is a mandate that has the possibility of becoming a mass of paperwork with no substance. You can do absolutely nothing and still comply with this standard.

Edited Transcript Of The Meeting

I've been on the front line in implementing the children at risk legislation. Each year, according to the law, I send out over 500 invitations to students and their parents and invite them to use the services in the school district for children at risk. In both years we got about five responses from parents, a one percent response—to the letter we've sent out. It is not a good working system. The letter has no impact in terms of parents coming in and asking for services.

We have also gone directly to the students to obtain signatures. As a result, we have approximately five parent signatures and 330 student signatures asking to take part in the Children At Risk Program.

Last year was the first year we were eligible for reimbursement for the Children At Risk Program. Our reimbursement was $1,164. The paperwork involved came to over $3,000, so last year we operated the program at a net loss. More important, the cost of the paperwork took money away from services we could have provided for at risk youth.

We identified about 700 students including approximately 30 elementary students and 60 middle school students. The bulk of our 700 students were from high school. This cannot be viewed as a preventative program. It is a program that identifies kids at the high school level after they begin to experience a lot of truancy. I would support a program that would in some way identify a greater number of kids at the elementary and middle school level and therefore.

There is a great disparity between the amount of additional services required by our district and the amount of money that we receive. If we take a look at at risk legislation we know that it is landmark legislation. Many states in the nation have requested information on it and yet when I take a look at the commitment dollar-wise it seems to be a relatively insignificant. Second—the whole notion of the legislation is reactive; it has got to become more preventative. In our school district we see kids at the elementary level being held at home, but all absences are excused. We know those kids are going to wind up in trouble but it is probably tenth grade before we can really do anything about it because they've got to have twenty days of unexcused absences plus be one more year's credits behind to be called "at risk." We are reacting rather than preventing.

A major problem in some of the smaller districts is the number of mandates and programs we are asked to do. These mandates involve AIDS, Suicide Prevention, Human Growth and Development, Staff Development, Developmental Guidance Model, School-Age Parent and Learnfare. We have no additional staff. All of these programs are run by current staff. Our guidance counselors are being asked to participate in these mandates and their guidance ratios are already 1 to 700.

The truancy law is also creating some real problems. Social services, even the DA, don't do anything with the kids when we determine they are truant. We can send letters and go to the house, but unless there is some kind of a court action, nothing happens.

We need to focus on the younger students. Because of the definition in the law, we don't have a lot of kids, K-6 or even K-8, who fall into the "children at risk definition," but as professionals we can identify those kids who are having problems and continue to work with them. Legislators must address these younger children and concern themselves with their needs.

Within our community we have two at risk committees. We have a nice mix on one committee - people from social services, a Unified Services Board representative, a juvenile officer, and the county

nurse. We also have a parent. We talked about kids at these meetings and initially everybody was real interested in participating. At one meeting the DA warned the juvenile officer to be careful what he said publicly. Social services is much more open about talking about these kids.

We have another youth-serving program in town. Individually, they are more than willing to share information with the schools, but when we get together as a committee to develop a comprehensive plan, then nobody wants to say anything. It was a great idea but nobody wants to talk anymore. We could try to get releases from everybody so that we could talk. I don't even know that we can identify who the adjudicated kids are. We know who they are but by law can we really say, "listen, we know you're an adjudicated delinquent."

There is a new phenomenon emerging. That is, that the more progress we make at getting a school, community, business, and resource providers together, the exchange of information becomes more complicated because many of those people are not privy to student information. The only recourse right now is parent release of information. Marquette County and Westfield and Montello have built their program for children at risk around parent permission to discuss pupil records.

The legislature has a great deal of interest in what is found in pupil records. For example, AB 790, which will go to the floor of the Assembly soon, authorizes school districts to obtain information regarding students involved in alcohol or other drug abuse-related incidents in the community. School principals were not always able to obtain information about kids in the community who were abusing alcohol and other drugs. They wanted to have that information so they could work more effectively with the kids. There was also 1987 Wisconsin Act 70 which dealt with the exchange of information on medical records as contained in your pupil records. There will be some technical amendments to that bill introduced. Not only do you have interest in clarifying these matters, but the legislature itself is in and out of pupil records.

Regarding children at risk legislation, we need to know how the information in student records might be used. We see an interagency approach as the solution for your school district. Part of that solution needs to define how pieces of legislation relate to exchange of information so that an interagency group can deal with the problems of children at risk.

Another problem area in the legislation which causes some difficulty for us is the excused versus unexcused absences. We believe an absence—whether excused or not—is a problem if a student is out twenty days during the year. People come up with all kinds of excuses for absences which are not legitimate. We would like to see the "unexcused versus excused" removed so it would just read "absences" as opposed to unexcused or excused.

The legislation seems to imply (as legislators often do) that nothing was going on for at risk youth before the legislation. There were a lot of programs in place before the at risk legislation came down the pike. We have a high risk community. The risk is getting higher all the time. Many of the youngsters in these programs right now don't fit the criteria the state defines as being "at risk." That is probably the greatest problem we have with the statute. When you have several thousand kids that are below the twenty-third percentile and then you have got to go to four other indicators to deem them to be "at risk," then you have a rigid definition that eliminates those that need the services the most. The definition needs to be broadened to include a subjective component. This quantitative definition of at risk youth is impossible to use. Where does professional judgment fit in?

One indicator that hasn't been mentioned is mobility—we've got a whole school's population moving and transferring. These kids have lived in 15 or 20 different places, yet none of the indicators the state hands down includes them. A broadening of the definition that would include some kind of professional judgment at the elementary level is critical. We, the profession, need some input into a broadening of that definition that includes subjective criteria, i.e., the professional judgment of people inside and outside the educational field.

Kids would become at risk or not at risk as the year progresses depending on the number of absences. The legislation assumes you can measure development in a student's academic achievement. That is not possible. It can't be done in any valid way so most professional people tend to ignore that. We have determined that what we can't use, we ignore. We also have given up looking for any cost effectiveness in this.

Even if the cost incentive will work awhile, there is almost a reverse incentive. That is, the reverse incentive is to continually try to identify five percent of your population as being dropouts. That is one of the frustrations I have experienced with the dropout factor. It seems there are a lot of loopholes in which I can take a 3.6 percent dropout factor and tell you by looking at individual cases I can reduce it by half. Now when it hits the press, (and I know that neighboring school districts are counting their dropouts differently than we are) it does make us look bad. All of a sudden the pressure is there. That leaves us to redefine how it is we go about counting dropouts.

Let's assume I have data that shows we have particular individuals that may drop out of school one year, return the following year and drop out again. They are counted two different times. In fact, we have counted the same kid four times, nineteen kids twice, and a number of kids three times in one year.

This effort to formalize a program for children at risk is one of the best things I have seen in many years. We have brought it into the consciousness of the boards and the administrators and we are seeing some dramatic results.

I like that we have a mandate. As an educator, it is good because without it you've got a lot of solo performances going on among the various schools—none of which are complete. I have been on many vocational education evaluations and had a chance to see what is going on in different school districts with regard to vocational programs that impact the Children at risk Programming. I see a lot of good things here and there, but they are not connected. That is what this legislation does.

If a kid has been identified with this rather rigorous definition, that makes the kid automatically at risk. I don't see why he has to sign a form. You take our Standards program, in which they are in the lower quartile in basic skills. The kid is automatically given our Standards program services all the way through from pre-kindergarten. There isn't any necessity of getting a signature; the kid <u>is</u> at risk.

Another problem lies with how we determine academic growth. Our research department couldn't find a computerized test anywhere that would allow us to do what is required. We were going to buy microcomputers and put them in schools and then have a quick and dirty way of getting a reading on the kid when he enters the program and then when he leaves. There was nothing available. We have pointed out the grade equivalency, one year or more behind, as opposed to determining his being behind in reading or math with his peer and age group. I think it would be more beneficial to look at the number of credits accumulated.

We need to look at prevention of programs and award districts for doing an exemplary job according to the guidelines established in prevention as opposed to intervention. Whatever we are going to be legislating, we have to make sure we fine-tune it enough so there are some rewards for us. But again, without the incentive, I don't know what you can do. You can tell the school districts "you ought to be doing this," you don't provide the incentive for it, and then penalize them for it. This is becoming a political problem that will hit the legislators in the not-too distant future.

We identify these kids for special help in reading and mathematics. These names appear in first and second grades up through middle school. They are in the programs and they are on the at risk lists. We know when these kids are in kindergarten if they are at risk. I am not saying we could do their high school diploma on the day that they enter kindergarten, but we have a pretty good idea who will make it and who will struggle. I like the idea that the DPI and the legislation have backed this program, a formalized program, with structure. We have the attention of the boards of education. It wasn't too long ago when our district was number two and now with the last statistics we are number sixty-six. That is really a significant, dramatic, turnaround in the number of dropouts that we have.

Response: The children at risk initiative was originally put forward by the state superintendent as part of his 1985-87 budget bill. What is frustrating is, it was a very comprehensive preschool through grade 12 initiative that would have driven money up-front to the district. Joint finance went with compromise legislation as it is today. Our definitions were much broader. Now we are trying to work together to see what kind of a children's agenda we can create in the next budget session.

Unless there is a mandate, you don't get the attention of the people, and its back to neglect. We have resources in our school districts that could be reallocated to a lot of these at risk programs. We have a budget of a hundred million dollars in our school district. We have placed in each one of our three high schools a full-time special needs coordinator whose primary responsibility is the children at risk within that building. That is costing us big bucks, but we reallocated the assignment of those people because we felt it was necessary. Lets encourage our decision-makers, policy-makers, to do a little reallocation of how they spend money. The incentive should be there, absolutely, because that is what really provides the seed money.

You have a special needs coordinator, but what about small school districts who are given these mandates? We have no additional staff and no additional monies to run all these programs. We have gone to the school board and told them, "here is everything we have been asked to do in addition to what we are already doing."

There is no time to do it right now. We can set it all up, but to do it, to carry out the program, is another matter. If there was some money available, we could write a proposal to get extra funds. Our school budget is six million dollars for the school year and the school board already gets hammered because that is too much.

One of the most frustrating things I have ever done is implement the at risk legislation. I think the fact that the legislation came down was good. It caused some school districts to focus in on these kids that have been totally neglected. It focused on the kind of kid that is falling between the cracks. This

is great because we, like many school districts, just chose to ignore them, exempt them as soon as possible, and then forget about them.

Therefore, if you could structure your state aids to give a little bit more to meeting the needs of school districts who are in that bind, then perhaps there could be some reallocation of your staff to have enough time to do effective programming.

Our staff have been listening because we are looking for answers. We have talked about some of the difficulty in parent response, parent cooperation, and parent signatures. It is much easier to work with the students directly. They recognize and accept the fact that they may need a program different from the ones most students go through. Right now the legislation is very narrow. It is basically a high school program. It is reactive; it really doesn't have much prevention or early intervention to it. There are problems of confidentiality between the agencies and courts. The matter of unexcused absences versus excused absences is a problem. The money behind the program at one-tenth extra is pretty weak and that gives us problems. Is it really enough to cover administrative cost, program cost, or is it just a little bit of sugar on the spoon because the mandate was given? Another area discussed is this matter of districts getting into number crunching and value judgments as to who is at risk, who has dropped out, and who has not dropped out.

Another one that came up is this whole manner of trying to measure pupil achievement and progress by the month. What we hear is the desire to get the quality job done but without appropriate tools to do it. We have a sense of responsibility to do the right thing, but no tools to help us do it.

One successful outcome mentioned is that we brought in new actors. We have used this legislation as a tool for getting everybody together (social services, unified board). While there is some problem with sharing information and confidentiality, others outside the school district don't hesitate to call and we don't hesitate to call them. That has been very positive.

The Department of Public Instruction is planning staff development inservices and conferences to promote interagency actions. In an examination of the Department, we realized that about sixty million to seventy million dollars are in some way touching at risk kids. Take Title I, school lunch, school-age parent programs, and AODA, just lots of programs that aren't directed specifically to these kids. It is clear these kids are going to be indirectly or directly affected by these Department programs.

The frustration at the Department of Public Instruction is that we have never been able to get the state to feel any special responsibility to fund guidance counselors or school nurses. It has been twenty-three years since the genesis of funding Special Ed Directors, psychologists, and social workers. If you ask if there is any logic in it, there isn't. We keep promoting a student support model however, encompassing the whole concept of student support as an ongoing initiative that includes at risk kids.

We need to draw society's attention to a whole group of children out there who are failing. Somebody has to say we don't want children to fail, we want to support an educational establishment that defines what can be done to help.

The legislature, too, has said that as a matter of public policymaking, we want the districts to be especially accountable for children who are at risk of dropping out of school.

In our district we deal with the high risk children a bit differently. We put money in the elementary and middle schools. We created a program so we have a resource teacher in each middle school. There is some extra paperwork, but in our work with kids we have had great success. We told the school board we were not sure this was exactly what we want to do but we wanted to try it for a year and see what happened. We are going to add to the at risk programs in the high schools next year, the board willing. We have identified the high risk kids in kindergarten through fifth and sixth grade. We have a list of them for tracking and we are pushing a lot of resources their way. We expect something to change. This includes closing in on parents who permit truancy. Principals want more training in confronting problem parents and the kids they affect. Unfortunately, there is no money for that.

We need to begin establishing a working relationship with the parents rather than just the student.

We identified our at risk youth through a teacher survey. We thought teachers were the best nominators of high risk kids. We gave them forty-five descriptors of high risk kids and said that anyone who has one or more of these are more than qualified. We had social, emotional, interpersonal, and academic criterion and identified 500 elementary kids that were high risk. I think at the elementary level we are talking more about an arrangement of services. We need to do other things such as arranging support groups.

Only the "legally at risk" got notices. The high risk didn't get notices unless the principal and the teacher decided they were going to call in and say, "we think your kid is high risk." We would be working with those families if they would cooperate.

Because we don't have parental consent, people are letting in kids on the basis of absenteeism versus unexcused absences. Some districts counted all the kids they had in selected tracks and called them all at risk. According to the auditors, you can't claim all these kids. They are not at risk. You have to go through the process. "This is an at risk kid and this is a kid who is something else." They say, "here is the law and here are the requirements. Now, where is your population?" What is clear enough is that this process doesn't work. We now have an opportunity once again to ask the public policy questions.

To give you an example of how poorly some districts are working with these kids, I received a letter which said, "It has come to my attention that you are waiving kids out by getting an excuse from the kid when he first comes to school in case you want to use it later. There is then an excuse in writing before school starts. That way if the kid screws up, you can say "you're out of here—it was nice seeing you, but . . .".

The bigger question remains with us today. What are we going to do to help the schools do this job? The truth of the matter is, people keep demanding more of you.

I think that is one of the problems we are going to have to deal with in this whole matter. What is going to be reasonable in terms of treating the district for this mandate? Well, we asked for auditors. We asked for nine auditors and the Governor is going to give us five. So, the question is what is the accountability going to be? At a point in time you can lose twenty-five percent of your state aid. It is a punishment program.

You were talking about that service package for kids. We don't have a consistent service package for kids.

I think the story will be told in this budget session and the next one. We just looked at a study in terms of how much the mandates are costing now—they don't cost a whole lot. The one that scares districts the most is the at risk one. If you escalate the population and you escalate who is eligible, the psychology is that the state will pay for it. That will frighten everybody. Will people expect a lot more money because you are mandating it? This conversation is going to go back and forth a few times and, hopefully, you are going to be in the room. I don't think we are going to say, "here is the answer." I think we are going to say, "here are a bunch of answers."

This is the only mandate that has the possibility of being a total paper program. You can do absolutely nothing and still comply with this standard. You could say that our program consists of conferencing the students—you may not approve it—but we will say conferencing by regular teachers and student service staff. If we can prove we've had our conferencing, we have in essence a working program that is doing nothing. So what if the kids aren't attending—you never said they had to attend. You just said we have to have a process in place. We have referred them for truancy and the truancy system is unable, or ineffective, because of the statutes, the judges, or whatever the reasons are.

Most of us agree with the spirit of the legislation. That is part of our job. The board, however, can say there are a million ways to comply with the mandates. One of them is to create a paper program. Write up a nice flowery plan, talk about how all these teachers are going to do wonderful things <u>if</u> the kids show up.

We could have a paper program. One of the things that has come out of our work with the LAB (Legislative Audit Bureau) is that in one case with the at risk program there were a number of students who were identified as meeting the definition but were not offered services consistent with the district's plan because the alternative programs these students needed were full. The district was saying, "We don't have the resources to create more alternative programs. When we get some additional resources and when we get a little more time, we will have more programs." The issue on the table is that if you are required to identify and provide programs consistent with the needs in the district, then at what point in time do you get ordered?

Components Of Interagency Collaboration To Serve At Risk Youth

Introduction

The number of at risk youth in Wisconsin is growing. The problem has overwhelmed local communities, public officials, teachers, school boards, and state agencies which monitor funds for these youths. There is a scarcity of successful solutions available but some key principles have been identified which should be included in the design of all programs serving children at risk. They are:

- No single agency can do the job and no single program approach is sufficient; programs that combine approaches are required.
- Programs of longer duration are likely to produce more lasting effects.
- Sequences of services, tailored to age, are required.
- Services targeting the neediest youth have the strongest payoff.
- School dropout prevention and improved school achievement are essential program goals.
- High quality program design, staff, and operations plus stable funding are critical success factors.

(R.H. deLone, 1987)

From the above list, it is easy to conclude that the multiple problems presented by at risk youth cannot be resolved with a single solution. The complexities of the problem require a coherent array of services. As part of the project in Wisconsin, the Department of Public Instruction has emphasized the concept of **interagency collaborations to effect positive change in the education and development of at risk youth.** This principle of collaboration was evident in the work and policy direction provided by,

- an interagency advisory council formed at the state level, and
- program staff from across the state who have designed and operated programs serving at risk youth through a collaborative model.

The goal of these two groups was to identify components in an interagency collaborative model which are necessary to include in a successful children at risk program. This goal was completed by analyzing information collected on a survey and at a meeting with these experts.

Before the results of these efforts are presented and analyzed, it is important to define what is meant by a "collaborative effort" to serve at risk youth.

"Interagency collaborations" refers to the coordinated efforts for resolving problems in delivering education and employment services to a target group, which in this case is at risk youths. They include the processes of stimulating and increasing cooperation among two or more programs sharing common goals and engaged in similar activities. The collaboration involves staff working together to improve services to their clients; thus forming a bridge of communication and services.

Collaborations are usually sought when a problem becomes too complex for one agency to handle. For example, the schools can attempt to work with at risk youth during the school day but without the help of the local health and social services office or a community based organization, the school is helpless to effect change in a family dominated by alcoholic parents. No matter how the school intervenes, the child will remain at risk until the home situation is altered.

Collaborations between agencies can result in:

- provision of more comprehensive services,
- more effective use of funds,
- more effective use of personnel,
- elimination of program duplication,
- increased prestige, public image and community support for the program, and
- better delivery of services.

Collaborations can be formal or informal. They can include only two agencies or all agencies in a local community that work with at risk youth. They can operate at the state level or the local level. They can be simple or complex; designed to meet the needs of the client or to meet the needs of the staff; short-term or long-term; implemented in a crisis or developed after extensive planning.

The next section of the paper will explore the successful collaborative models which currently exist in Wisconsin to serve at risk youth.

Factors in the Model

One of the activities completed during the Edna McConnell Clark grant, was a sharing of information among program managers and directors who successfully manage interagency, collaborative programs for children at risk.

Identification of successful practices served to complete three goals of the Wisconsin project.

- Develop policy recommendations to better serve children at risk of school, career, and employment failure.

- Identify a model for school and community interaction to serve children at risk.

- Integrate research and program activities initiated by various state agencies and policymakers.

Prior to the meeting each invitee received a survey to be completed and discussed at the meeting. The survey contained questions on:

- **successful programs and strategies** to serve children at risk through interagency cooperation with a focus on specific interagency approaches to meeting the following needs: pre-employment and employment skills, support services, and parental involvement;

- **who** should be included on the planning team and service delivery team in a successful cooperative effort;

- the **type of collaboration** that has been most successful, e.g., mandated, formal, informal, financial, sharing of staff, sharing of resources, sharing of case files, etc.;

- how **fiscal issues** impinge on cooperative efforts;

- the portion of the **target population left behind** that could be better served with expanded collaborations;
- the **needs not met** because a collaborative agreement could not be reached;
- the **significance of the Children At Risk Plan** in program planning and implementation;
- the **role of the Private Industry Council** in cooperative efforts to serve children at risk;
- **changes in public policy** that would enable program managers and operators to better serve children at risk in Wisconsin;
- **criteria for success** when working with children at risk.

Participants

Kathy Marty*
CESA #3
Fennimore, Wisconsin

Dan Wiltrout
Stoughton High School
Stoughton, Wisconsin

Ken Ramminger
Department of Social Services
Montello, Wisconsin
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Jerry Hanoski (represented by
Jackie Luxford)
SDA #16

Byron Malsin (represented by
Catherine Lindsay)
University of Wisconsin
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Steve Terry
SDA #9
Ashland, Wisconsin

Mary Nelson
CESA #6
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Andrew Hopgood (represented by
Maureen Coffey)
Milwaukee Area Technical College

Jim Lee
CESA #12
Ashland, Wisconsin

Karen Ehrle*
School Age Parent Program
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Dave Nass
CESA #7
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Ann Wondergen
Sheboygan County Social Services
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Laura Halverson
CESA #4
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Donna Cook
Kenosha Unified Schools
Kenosha, Wisconsin

*Completed survey but did not attend meeting when survey results were discussed.

These individuals work with projects which have a strong interagency component in their at risk youth programs. Many of these programs are funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The purpose of the programs is to prepare youth and unskilled adults for entry into the labor force by providing job training and training related activities. Eight percent of the state's JTPA funds are divided equally between the Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Board of VTAE.

State legislation requires that at least 50 percent of the 8 percent funds be spent on "most in need youth," those who are at least one year behind in academic credits or have dropped out of school.

There are three primary programs in JTPA which serve youth: 1) Title IIA programs are year-round programs operated by local PIC's. Services to 14-21 year olds are emphasized through a legislative mandate to local PIC's to spend approximately 40 percent of their Title IIA funds on services to youth. 2) Title IIB programs are operated by PIC's during the summer months to provide summer employment for economically disadvantaged youth. These summer youth programs are required to include basic skills assessment and remediation. 3) DPI eight percent Educational Coordination grants are targeted to youth at risk of dropping out of school and to dropouts.

The DPI/JTPA eight percent funded projects are operated through local schools and CESA's. Program activities include tutoring and credit remediation, instruction in PIC-approved employment competencies, career guidance and counseling, work experience, basic skills/remediation, and other services to help youth remain in school and earn credits towards graduation. All projects require coordination with local Children At Risk plans and require that Education for Employment components be provided for each youth enrolled.

Program staff from both the school based programs and the SDA based programs provided information and ideas on how each type of project reached at risk youth *and* how multiple operators, (the schools, CESAs, Health and Social Services, and the SDA) were able to work together. The types of programs represented are illustrated by the following descriptions:

Example 1. This program provides early intervention and coordination of school and human services resources for children in grades third through eighth in two school districts. The children identified are those who are:

- performing below their capacity,
- receiving D's and F's,
- demonstrating behavior problems, or
- acutely withdrawn.

The objective is to reduce school dropouts. Staff members of the collaborative program work with the parents and family. Parental consent is a prerequisite to participation in the program . As part of the program, the Directors of the Department of Social Services, the Unified Services Board, and the Guidance Center meet weekly for case staffings with the Elementary School Principals, School Psychologists, and the Project Social Worker.

Example 2. Through a combination of school and community services, this program serves at risk youth through classroom training, inservice groups, retreats, career resource center programs, attainment of youth employment competencies, job training, computer assisted instruction, job shadowing, and work experience.

Example 3. This SDA managed project consists of a consortium of 12 school districts and a County Youth Restitution Program. The project design has two components: classroom training and work opportunities in the public and private sector. Academic credit is granted for classroom instruction and work experience that includes completion of the PIC Youth Competencies, vocational assessment, and remedial and pre-employment instruction. Each of the schools has a JTPA coordinator who functions in a variety of roles as teacher, coach, job developer, job supervisor, and advocate for the students. An Advisory Council of employers, students, parents, and school personnel is part of the project. One of the primary goals of this project is dropout and "drop-in" prevention. A follow up study will

be conducted to evaluate the outcomes of the program. Absenteeism, disciplinary referrals, and grades will be part of the program evaluation.

Example 4. Project Second Chance, located in Wisconsin's largest urban center, provides dropouts an opportunity to re-enroll in school and receive a high school diploma. The program identifies high school dropouts between the ages of 16-18 and provides opportunities for them to re-enroll and pursue educational alternatives. Enrollees receive educational assessment and placement services, career counseling, and an employment plan, job seeking skills, and job placement. The educational options available to the returning student include the full range of offerings at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and the Milwaukee Public Schools, as well as academic instruction offered at community-based organizations. Other goals of the program include the development of a dropout intervention process; the development of cooperative agreements between the educational agencies; and the procurement of full or part-time employment for the students. There is also a family outreach worker in the program who serves as the direct liaison between the schools and the student's parents or guardians, as well as faculty and staff.

In conjunction with this program, the Milwaukee Public Schools have been funded to provide vocational assessment to assist school dropouts, ages 16-18, in reentering Milwaukee Public School through linkages with MATC, Liaison Counselor Program and community agencies. The Milwaukee Public Schools is proposing the development of a separate vocational assessment center which will provide the student with an Individualized Education Employment Plan specifying areas of vocational strength and recommendations for appropriate educational programs.

Summary – Survey Questionnaires

A survey was sent to seventeen program directors who, through interagency collaboration, serve children at risk of school and work failure. The goal of the survey was to document successful models of interagency collaborations. Thirteen surveys were completed. The results follow.

1. What is the goal of the collaborative effort that serves children at risk?

The goals of the programs were as varied as the programs themselves. Those who completed the surveys described their major goals in the following ways:

- prepare youth for the workforce
- promote success in school
- decrease welfare costs
- maximize services to children at risk
- dropout prevention
- improve competencies in basic skills
- have available a broad range of services to children at risk
- keep youth involved in school
- increase graduation rates
- promote partnerships
- raise self-esteem
- provide a support network for youth
- keep teen parents in school until graduation
- acquisition of pre-employment skills

2. Who is involved in the collaborative effort?

The same partnerships were mentioned by many of the respondents. The partners most frequently included were private industry councils, schools, businesses, and health and social services. Other parties involved in the collaborations were:

Unified Services
Mental Health Clinics
Teachers
Counselors
University of Wisconsin-Extension
LVECs
Community-Based Organizations
CESAs
Technical Colleges
Criminal Justice
Churches
Legislators
Private Foundations
Parents
PTOs
Hospitals
Community Action Programs
Job Service
University
AODA Program Staff
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

3. How do Children At Risk benefit from the collaborations?

- They have the benefit of being enrolled in an alternative educational program.
- Their basic skills level improves.
- They have increased services available to them.
- They receive services appropriate to their individual needs rather than being forced into an already existing program.
- Increased employment and opportunities in the work place
- Improved achievement in school
- High School Diploma
- Support Services are available including financial aid, child care, transportation, and work experience.
- Contact with a staff who is **trained to work with children at risk**
- The students become part of a structured follow up system to insure that they don't fall through the cracks.
- Coordinated efforts at the agency level provide more services and support.
- Teens develop linkages with their community.
- Barriers to many community services are removed.
- They are part of a program which was systematically designed so that services compliment each other.

4. How do you as an agency benefit from the collaborations?

- The agency is now able to work with youth **through** the schools
- Welfare costs are reduced
- More "bang for the bucks"
- Increased resources
- Students are better prepared for school and the world of work
- Students gain realistic work experiences
- Expanded awareness of other programs in the local community that are working with the same clients
- Easier to obtain funds because of increased contact with local and state officials
- More options available to support youth through difficult times
- Professional growth for staff
- Assists in meeting programmatic goals
- Maximizes services
- Helps schools meet prescribed standards

5. How do you define "success" of your collaborative efforts, i.e., how do you evaluate the coordination component of your program?

(These questions focus on the factors used to determine whether the collaboration has been working well.)

- The child in the program is no longer at risk.
- Responsibility is shared throughout the life of the collaboration.
- The future of youth participating in the program is improved.
- Channels of communication between all participating agencies remain open.
- Systems adapt to complement each other.
- Improved school performance by participating youth
- Number of students who obtain high school diplomas
- Amount of programs that share resources
- Numbers of youth returning to school, remaining at a job, achieving academically, improving their attendance at school, *and* a reduction in disciplinary referrals
- Better understanding of community resources
- Elimination of duplication in local agencies

6. How do you use policy-making boards locally or statewide to support your coordination efforts?

- Obtain agreement on plans
- Develop awareness of services within agency and within the local community
- Problem-solving
- Advice and evaluation
- Planning, implementation, and support
- Elected officials are asked to endorse policies and plans.
- To define goals and design collaborative programs

7a. Name some barriers you had to overcome when trying to coordinate services.

- Getting schools to accept "outsiders" working with their students
- Funding regulations and excess paperwork
- Clarification of procedures among all parties
- Arriving at mutually agreed upon objectives
- Finding a way to make daycare available
- Lack of interest by schools to get involved in JTPA
- Enrollment procedures of JTPA and Children At Risk Programs
- Lack of available staff time to work on coordination
- Lack of funds to support coordinated activities
- Need to take the time and effort to establish credibility of program and staff
- Getting information past the decision-makers in the agencies to front line staff members
- Getting credit for JTPA activities that take place in schools
- Differences in operating procedures between agencies
- Getting the community interested in at risk youth
- Being viewed stereotypically as an agency
- Working through the fiscal program guidelines of each agency as well as differing philosophies on serving the at risk student.

7b. What strategies did you use to overcome these barriers?

- Continued contact to keep pushing collaborations.
- Produced positive outcomes, thus proving success to those critical of program.
- Identified leaders in schools and community and then worked directly with them to obtain support for collaborative efforts to serve at risk youth.

- Held meetings to break down communication barriers, philosophical differences, solve problems, and develop a general awareness of the need to work together to confront the multiple problems of at risk youths.
- The Private Industry Council was persuaded to choose children at risk as a priority in their planning
- Staff training on eligibility requirements and procedural peculiarities for each program
- Developed a consortium of schools by identifying common problems that all schools had to work on vis a vis at risk youth
- Developed a working plan to direct the collaboration
- Followed all school procedures so that the student could receive all available credit
- Schools united behind the CESA to obtain funds and services
- Joint inservices between staff members who are expected to collaborate when serving at risk youth
- Open minded attitude on the part of management so that the inevitable problems that arise from collaborations can be resolved in a creative fashion

8. Name barriers that you were *unable* to overcome.

1. Parental involvement in the programs
2. Staff turnover
3. Formal identification of the AODA person in the family
4. Coordinating AODA and family based counseling for the identified student
5. Money
6. Time to maintain a coordination agreement
7. JTPA programs for out-of-school youth rather than in-school youth
8. Lack of funding from the Department of Public Instruction for Children At Risk program
9. Loss of seed monies for a successful program
10. Agencies in the community that just are not interested in working together
11. Attitude problems about working with "difficult kids"
12. Too large a caseload
13. Limited resources
14. Turfdom and mistrust
15. Failure to secure parental permission for the child to participate
16. Difficulty in servicing when school boundaries don't correspond to VTAE and H&SS boundaries

9. Can you predict whether the coordination established between agencies will continue after your current project is completed? If so, why? If not, what factors discourage you from continuing your coordination efforts?

The responses to this question were mixed. They ranged from very positive to tentative due to outside influences, not to any identifiable weakness in the collaboration. The programs all seemed successfully coordinated but funding, public policy, etc. will influence how long these collaborations really last.

Others feel that their collaborations have taken on a life of their own in the community. The only discernible factor which makes a difference between those who are positive and those who are tentative is the belief that the leadership in the community can "pull it off." Without that leadership and continued commitment, coordination is not possible. Eventually, personnel changes and public policy barriers might serve to undermine these collaborations, but the respondents seemed hopeful.

10. **How has the sharing of information about specific students been affected by the privacy laws?**

When parental consent is obtained, it is not been a problem.

11. **Who do you think should be included on the planning team *and* service delivery team in a successful cooperative effort? Check all those that apply.**

	# of Respondents (n = 12)
Social Service Staff	10
Pupil Service Personnel	11
Regular Teaching Staff	11
Law Enforcement Officers	7
School Administrators	12
Parents	12
Special Needs Staff	12
Community Organizations	10
Job Service	8
Curriculum Coordinator	10
PIC	10
Vocational Rehabilitation	8
LVEC	11
Business	8
CESA	3
Students	1
Media	1
Post Secondary (VTAE and University)	1

12. **When serving children at risk, what administrative components do you believe are part of successful coordination efforts?**

	# of Respondents (n = 12)
Joint planning	11
Use of joint policy making councils	5
Consolidating funds	9
Conducting joint inservice programs	8
Joint funding for support services	6
Exchange of staff members	4

	# of Respondents (n = 12)
Circulating newsletters	6
Joint payrolls	3
Joint monitoring of projects	4
Joint lobbying	4
Informal meetings	9
Regularly scheduled meetings	10
Special effort to reduce feelings of turfdom, loss of power	9
Joint curriculum planning	6
Joint recordkeeping	2
Data collection	6
Outreach activities	6
Clerical services	3

13. **Identify services that can best be delivered to at risk youth through collaborative efforts.** (Most of the services listed below were mentioned by more than one respondent.)

- Career Education
- Specialized curriculum
- Work experience
- Public relations
- Support services
- Recruitment
- Equipment
- Reporting
- Parent support programs
- Medical assistance
- Eligibility determinations
- Intake
- Staff inservices
- Identification of needy youths
- Improve self-esteem
- Prevention strategies
- Education for Employment standard
- Subsidized employment
- 1:1 attention
- Job placement
- Assessment
- Counseling
- Referrals
- Planning a course of action
- Restitution programs
- Legal assistance
- Preschool screening
- Post-school follow-up
- Teaching
- Monitoring youth
- Basic skills enhancement
- Contact with family
- Program evaluation
- Children At Risk standard

14. What fiscal issues figure into your cooperative efforts?

- Redundant reporting
- Continuity of funds always questionable.
- Who will share in what cost? Who can share in what costs?
- Recordkeeping is more complicated.
- Need expertise in budget and cost allocations for multiple purposes to succeed
- More dollars = more complexity in recordkeeping
- Shared staff need to keep better track of time.

15. What procedures do you use to resolve ambiguities or disagreements that occur between participating agencies?

- Continual communication
- Meetings (both formal and informal)
- Joint staff inservices
- Joint planning from the start of the collaboration
- Submissive role to schools and social services
- Cooperative agreements
- Written agreements
- Personal contact whenever possible

16. What is the significance of the school district's Children At Risk Plan in your program planning and implementation?

- Coordination of services is easier.
- JTPA is the primary program used in the plan.
- The Children At Risk plans facilitate work with the schools. They now encourage others outside the school to share materials and services when working with at risk youth.
- The plan is an integral part. This plan has led to public recognition of the problem. However, because its public policy around the issue is superficial so is our board's response to it.
- It gives the problems of these youths more legitimacy with a state policy behind it.
- Small districts seem to follow the CESA's Children At Risk plans and the larger districts have their own plans but periodically use CESA services.
- Promotes collaborations at the local level
- Provides vehicle for schools and JTPA to work together.
- Is a starting point for cooperation on common objectives
- Creates a place for the CESA in the local school districts
- No influence

17. What changes in current practices or policies must occur in order to achieve the desired level of collaboration to effectively serve children at risk?

- Increased financial resources to accompany public policy
- Incentives in public policy to enhance collaborative efforts
- Continue bringing issue of children's agenda to public attention through policy development.
- Need policies which focus on early intervention.
- "Children At Risk" should be a certification category in JTPA.
- Coordination should be improved through the Vocational Education Act and JTPA.
- Education for Employment and Children At Risk are good ideas but they need financial support.
- Learnfare services need to follow public policy.
- Children At Risk Standards need to include younger children.

- Dropouts need state aid in order to effectively bring them back to the schools.
- Staff development should be included in Children At Risk public policy.
- Break down the policy barriers between education and H&SS.
- Mandates without adequate funding need to be altered.
- There must be more congruent definitions to serve youth who need services.
- Public policy somehow needs to let those at the local level know that this problem with our youth is really everyone's problem.
- There are many problems associated with the need to cross boundaries within the same school district to access JTPA, H&SS, and VTAE services.
- Definition of "at risk" should be expanded.
- PICs should include "at risk" as a major target group.
- PICs should allow more 14-15-year-olds in the program in an effort to promote prevention.
- DETP should offer incentive money for keeping students in school; not just focus on placement.
- Continuity of services should be encouraged not discouraged. Encourage youth to be in the program until graduation. Collaborations should be able to provide services until that time.
- Each district should not be required to put in a Children At Risk plan. Instead of emphasis on the paperwork, focus should be put on the services.
- Financial rewards should be available to school districts that do a good job keeping youth in schools.
- More technical assistance should be available in a coordinated fashion to those who are working at the local level with these youths.
- Dollars need to be attached to a plan in order to provide services as stated. Some participants suggested an extra 10 percent add-on to state aids for services offered in the district. That would be enough for large districts to run their own programs. Smaller districts could form a consortium and pool their money and services.
- Need to coordinate efforts for prevention instead of segmenting them as with suicide prevention, AODA, CAR, and Learnfare. The package of mandates and resources needs to be pulled together.
- Children At Risk public policy should be seen as an umbrella piece of legislation requiring that all services to youth be provided through the local Children At Risk plan. The schools, social services, employment and training, and business would be included on a committee that establishes the community plan.
- Critical piece to be included: uniformity of definition and uniformity of access.
- Need to examine the concept of an "excused" and "unexcused" absence .
- The number of absences is easily monitored but is it a meaningful criteria in the definition? The absences are a symptom but the service providers really need to be focusing on the root of the problem. Public policy should reflect that concern.
- Include coordination language in the policy and attach money to it .
- Money follows the child; not the program. For example, each child could have $1,400 attached to him/her. The community would show the state agency their plan for the child and then the money would be released to the community. We could then see where the money goes and at the same time monitor the child's progress.
- The Children At Risk Program is a paper program in many districts but that is important because it identifies the child and brings attention to the issue. It also makes the district accountable for Children At Risk.
- There is a need for equal access. If a district does not have a high dropout rate, many schools think they don't need a plan. The kids in that district who are at risk are not served. At the same time, a student in a high dropout district does have access to services. A student at risk should have equal access no matter where he/she lives.
- What do "requirements" accomplish? Sometimes a lot but do they achieve our goal of providing appropriate services? What is the turning point that could bring more schools on board around this issue? Is it requiring more plans or using something more creative?

- Before requiring submission of plans from all schools, open the definition and allow schools the flexibility to identify students under local or state parameters. The plan should be signed off by others in the community to show ownership of the problem.
- Incentives and readiness are important if the program is to work in a community. Don't make these services mandatory. Just have incentives for services and the effective coordination of these services available to those who are ready to move forward.
- We should be looking at how well a plan operates in terms of incentives, not just the plan as it looks on paper. Incentives will move things along.

Summary

The purpose of the survey and discussions with program operators was to identify components in their collaborative efforts which improve the lives of at risk youth. These components would then be included in a conceptual model upon which local communities could design programs. This issue, like many others in education and human services does not a have a precise answer, but there are recommendations that the experts agree should be part of a collaborative effort to reach at risk youth. These are:

1. **Outcomes and Goals of Collaborations for Serving At Risk Youth**

   - improvement in academic skills
   - enhanced Self-Esteem
   - positive trends in decreasing dropout rates, attendance, number of disciplinary referrals, graduation
   - improved relations with parents, teachers and community
   - improved career planning
   - improved linkages between local, state and federal resources
   - full employment five years after graduation

2. **Strategies Critical to Reaching These Goals**

   - hire caring staff
   - provide inservices for staff so they are equipped to work with children at risk
   - develop a sense of community and school membership within the child and his/her family
   - collaborate with others in community to achieve maximum resources for youths
   - maintain low student/staff ratio in programs and all classes
   - individualize services; fit a program to the student's needs instead of trying to fit a student into an already existing program
   - tailor rewards and incentives to each child as needed
   - involve parents at all levels of planning and service delivery
   - understand each other's professional roles when collaborating
   - work as a team to help this child so he/she is no longer at risk
   - use the community as mentors for students
   - rely on intermediary agencies such as the CESA to bring others in the community together around the issue of children at risk
   - use resource centers within schools to assess, teach basic skills, provide 1:1 attention, peer interaction and support, incentives and individualized instruction

Conference Proceedings: Wisconsin's Children At Risk

Moving a Children's Agenda Forward, May 8-10, 1988, Madison, Wisconsin

This section contains the proceedings for a statewide conference on Wisconsin's children at risk. The purpose of the conference was to examine Wisconsin's experiences with children at risk legislation and to develop policy recommendations which will move forward a broader children's agenda to better address educational and developmental needs of the state's children and youth.

The conference agenda contained two major components:

- presentation of critical ideas by state and national experts that enabled the audience to formulate policy recommendations to the state superintendent, the governor, and the legislature; and

- recommendations by workgroups which addressed alternative policy directions for related legislation; policies which must include integrated prevention, parental involvement, and interagency approaches to providing services to children at risk.

Critical Ideas to Consider When Examining Current Policy and Services Directed at Children At risk

Speakers were invited to the conference to help participants examine our experiences with Wisconsin's Children At Risk legislation, review national trends in this area, and identify policy initiatives which would move forward children at risk programming in the context of a broader children's agenda. The following ideas were highlighted by the speakers.

- Not to invest in America's children would be economic stupidity and a moral blunder. Without a properly trained workforce, the well-being of our nation is in jeopardy. Public education plays a fundamental role in this process. It is imperative that schools and human service agencies be given adequate funding to invest in our children. (Grover)

- It is important to deflect attention away from the characteristics of at risk youth and focus instead on the way schools can be altered to lower dropout rates. Research suggests that there is much schools can do to alleviate the dropout problem. (Wehlage)

- School membership must be extended to all students in order to reach higher retention rates. Such membership is fostered when teachers cultivate positive and respectful relations with students, express a willingness to help with their personal problems, provide active assistance in meeting the requirements of the institution, and larger society, and establish a link between the student's future and his current educational experiences. (Wehlage)

- There are four impediments to school membership that educational institutions can consciously address. These are lack of adjustment, isolation, incongruity, and difficulty. (Wehlage)

- Our children are our most valuable resource, but they are slowly being destroyed. We need to be willing to protect them. One of the most important actions we can take is to give children hope, aspirations, and dreams. (Perry)

- We need to involve the business community in the social, economic, and educational needs of the poorest children. Only in this way will the broad public support required to fund adequate programs be developed. (Shalala)

- Concentrating on early intervention programs that have proven to be successful in preventing future educational failure allows us to link health and welfare issues to education. Establishing this connection is imperative if we are to address the needs of the most at risk children. (Shalala)

- All children can learn. Not only can they learn, but we know how to teach them. What we teach ought to be relatively the same and relatively challenging for all student populations. (Brown)

- The best way to reach our goals with at risk youths is to develop legislation that focuses on entitlements rather than funding. We need to guarantee education and related services in meeting the educational needs of all youth. We need to focus on outcomes rather than process. (Brown)

What Should Wisconsin's Dream Be?

Conference workgroups were asked to complete a two part task. The first was to prioritize a list of twelve recommendations regarding policy for children at risk programming in Wisconsin. The second task involved identifying policy implications of the three recommendations viewed as most important by the group.

Of the seven groups, six included early identification and intervention among the top three recommendations. Five of the seven groups identified a whole child approach. Three chose school structure and another three chose school curriculum/instructional approach.

Though the formation of community linkages, staff training, parenting, and better pupil accounting procedures were not isolated as primary concerns, reference was consistently made to these issues in group discussions of the other recommendations.

Conclusion

We don't have at risk youth because educators or social service workers have failed to do something they should have done. We have children at risk in our communities and schools for a variety of reasons: demographic changes, federal funding priorities, a diminished sense of community, the rapidity of change, and the fact that traditional institutions are no longer offering children the support they once did. As a result, more kids come to school with problems that interfere with their ability to learn. We must wrap the families of at risk children with support.

Proper respect must be given to all levels of government. The setting of policy must be acknowledged as a legislative responsibility. The implementation of that policy, however, must be regarded as the proper task of people at the local level.

Welcome

Victor J. Contrucci
Assistant Superintendent

Victor Contrucci, Assistant Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction, called for Wisconsin educators to become involved in the shaping of legislation for at risk youth. He argued that people in the schools must assist legislators in framing new laws to assure their workability. He opened the conference with a purpose statement from State Superintendent Dr. Herbert Grover.

> **"Our purpose in coming together is to look at mutual experiences with Wisconsin's children at risk legislation and to develop policy recommendations which will move forward a broader children's agenda to better address educational and developmental needs of our youth.**
>
> **"During this working conference, you will also have the opportunity to learn how educators in other states are responding to the needs of children at risk. You will have the opportunity to address alternative policy directions for related legislation; policies which need to include integrated prevention, parental involvement, and interagency approaches to providing services to children at risk.**
>
> **"I believe that you will find this conference to be especially thought-provoking and challenging. You will hear from nationally recognized experts who will provide you with insights regarding facts and trends about emerging issues and needs of children. Coupled with this information, the experiences you have had with Wisconsin's legislation will be significant in shaping recommendations for new public policy in this arena."**

The last several legislative sessions produced a variety of initiatives that didn't mesh well in your communities. The truancy legislation is about to be passed. Learnfare arrived on the scene and had a direct impact on attendance policies in schools and on our children at risk programs. Many external forces in our society have an impact on our children at risk programs. For example, we have been involved in some very intense discussions with the Department of Health and Social Services around questions such as the future of daycare in Wisconsin and the kinds of policy directions that would challenge the traditional mission of each agency. The Department of Health and Social Services is the regulator of daycare in the state. Yet, the schools need to work with our "latch key children" and ensure their safety when they arrive at school and when they leave the classroom. Like it or not, the school is becoming involved in more than "education." The school is becoming involved in the total social fabric of the community.

We, as educators and staff members working with human resources agencies, have a tremendous investment in the policy directions of this state and nation as they relate to children at risk in our towns, cities, and rural areas. This is a national agenda. We need to work together. We have talked about our children in need for a long time. The hour has arrived for action. There is no place to hide. The problems are there and the needs of our youth are pressing upon us.

Solutions are being determined outside the schools too. For example, a piece of legislation has been proposed that would allow judges to order children to various educational programs. The cost would be the responsibility of the local school district.

The handwriting is on the wall. We as a larger society are trying to come to grips with our children at risk. We can be part of determining that future by pushing for an integrated public policy. This conference will give us the opportunity to kick off our push toward action as we get ready for the next executive budget and the legislative agenda. There are people in Wisconsin who are ready for action. They will move forward with or without us. It is important we come together and work together as

agencies, as representatives of local communities and as citizens of Wisconsin to bring good, sound public policies to bear on the needs of our youth.

We have the first step in our children at risk statute. What will our next step be? Let's not wait for others to complete it without us. Let's define it, take it to the legislature, and implement it throughout our state, counties, and local communities. There are components of the statute that many feel need to be changed. We have talked to school people about some of the problems they have had. The legislative audit bureau has made some suggestions for improvement. Coordinated services should be part of our action plan. Let's make our policies better. Let's discuss the agenda we have for Wisconsin's children. Let's get the state moving in the most positive direction we can.

The present legislation for at risk youth came from two main thrusts. One of them was internal (in the Department of Public Instruction). We looked at a whole range of populations we felt needed help. Agency people and private citizens were also involved. They were concerned that many of our children were falling through the cracks. The ideas of these two groups blended together to create our present legislation. Sometimes it works, sometimes it fails us, and in so doing fails our children.

We hope you have a good conference. We have formed a multi-tiered attack within our own agency with respect to at risk youth. We have staff solely working on these programs and policies. They will be participating with you during this conference. We also have, within the agency, a group of people we feel are critical in delivering services to at risk children from Chapter I to the School Lunch Program to the School Age Parent Programs. We have interagency work groups discussing how we can meet the needs of our troubled youth. Represented on those work groups are staff from the Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature.

Many activities of these work groups (including this conference) have been funded by a grant from the National Governor's Association. We will be able to continue our efforts because we have just received a grant from the Council of Chief State School Officers. We were one of eleven states funded, so we hope to keep Wisconsin active and we hope you will join us as we move forward.

"Children At Risk in Wisconsin"

June Perry, Executive Director
New Concepts Self-Development Center, Inc.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Introduced by Barbara Bitters
Department of Public Instruction

I have the pleasure of introducing June Perry. Perhaps many of you already know her. We will be working together as part of a project the department is doing on teen parents, especially single teen parents. As I reviewed her resume, I formed several conclusions about her as a person and as a professional. Words like "energetic," "optimistic," and "someone with enough initiative to start her own business."

She started her professional career as a child protective services worker in the Milwaukee County Department of Social Services back in the early 1970s. In 1975 she left and become a co-founder of New Concepts Self-Development Center, Inc. which started out as a small mental health agency with a strong focus on outreach to the community and on cultural relevance for inner-city black individuals in need. The business began with a $45,000 grant. By 1988 it had grown to become a comprehensive agency. They have a $500,000 annual operating budget and work with and provide services to about 10,000 children and adults in Milwaukee each year.

Our speaker has participated in a lot of volunteer efforts. She has been on the Board of Directors of the Task Force on Battered Women, Legal Aid Society, The Milwaukee Council on Drug Abuse, The Girl Scouts, The Urban League, the Mental Health Association, the Task Force on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, and Northcott Neighborhood House.

Currently, she is on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Council on Human Concerns, the Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy, the Life Options Coalition in Milwaukee, The Wisconsin Association of Family and Children Agencies, Professional Dimensions, and Charity Funds.

She has received many awards of recognition for her fine work: in 1983 and 1985 from the Black Women's Network; one was Women of the Year Award and one was the Trailblazer Award. She is the co-chair of the Milwaukee New Urban Panel on Teenage Pregnancy Prevention. In 1988 she was selected the social worker of the year by Newcare Health System and this year she received a Community Services Award from Frontiers International.

As Executive Director of New Concepts, June has initiated quite a breadth of programming: instruction for technician training for displaced homemakers, word processing training for displaced homemakers, community education for black women on domestic violence, Teach-One-Reach-One—role modeling and group work programming for teen parents, sexual assault treatment program for black children, intensive home-based therapy for black families, youth motivation and education seminars, prenatal child abuse prevention for pregnant teens, the Mell parenting skills program for teen parents, which has just been refunded for up to three years under the Department of Health and Social Services, and about ten more programs. One of her goals is to continue to protect our most valuable resource, our children.

Perry asked members of the audience to write one word they felt described the situation of children in Wisconsin. Nearly twice as many people chose words such as confused, anxious, troubled, or endangered rather than more positive words.

Perry used this fact to underline the primary point of her address: Children are our most valuable resource, but they are slowly being destroyed. We need to be willing to protect them, even if this means taking drastic action.

She suggested that one of the most important actions we can take is to give children hope, aspirations, and dreams. She then described the Teach-One-Reach-One program at the New Concepts Center. This program, which works with 7- to 13-year-old girls, is based on three premises: (1) Respect the child's strengths, (2) respect the child's parents and her home environment, and (3) expose the child to a lifestyle to which she might aspire. Though this program utilizes mentors, Perry emphasized the importance of not seeing such individuals as a replacement for the child's parents.

A second important action is the development of programs aimed at prevention rather than intervention. This end is achieved more easily if schools collaborate with other community agencies to provide services necessary to ensure a child's positive educational and social development.

Perry concluded by reading words written by conference participants that reflected a more hopeful outlook for Wisconsin youth. These included terms such as changing, challenging, learning, surviving. She suggested that these terms are goals to work toward. At present, however, they do not express the experience of many children in our state.

You have some index cards in front of you because we are going to do a short exercise. I want you to take a card and write just one word on it to describe what you feel is the state of children in Wisconsin today.

Wanting, needy, directionless, full of anxiety, depressed, troubled, bewildered, needful, endangered, anxious, in crisis, uneducated, fearful, confused, screwed up, and vulnerable. The descriptions of Wisconsin children written by the conference delegates are troubling. It's obvious that our children are in crisis.

"At risk" is a popular term these days. It used to be "disadvantaged;" and before that it was "poverty-stricken;" and I'm sure before that there was another word the Federal Government decided would be the buzz word to get the dollars. The term "at risk" hasn't been around too long, but the children who are at risk have been with us for a long time.

This is a serious topic. It is serious because of what is happening to our children in Madison, Milwaukee, Manitowoc, or Racine or Eagle River, or New York or Atlanta, or South Carolina. Our children are our greatest resource, and we are slowing destroying them. We have committees to save all our other natural resources. We have the naturalists who brave unthinkable odds to save turtle eggs, whooping cranes, eagles, whales, seals and other endangered species. These people will lay down in front of a bulldozer to stop destruction of an endangered tree. They will sit and wait for days for a turtle to lay her eggs so they can protect them. They do this because they want to protect a natural resource that is endangered. If they don't do it, we will lose that resource.

We must take drastic action if we want to save our children. We must reassess our priorities and remove the risks and the conditions that create a dangerous situation for our children. You are charged with looking at the existing Children At Risk statutes and deciding if what we have is adequate. If not, what do we need to change, add, or eliminate? We might need to start all over again.

The current statute defines children at risk as dropouts, pupils absent from school without acceptable excuses, children who are parents, pupils adjudicated delinquent, and who are one year or more behind their age group in the number of credits attained. The statute directs each school board to provide services for these children.

When I read the statute, I thought about the children we serve in New Concept. We serve children who are about as at risk as you can get. They are from single parent homes and live in public or substandard housing. They are from low income homes. Their parents are unemployed or underemployed. They are mostly all minorities. What we provide to these children are services that make their lives better and help them achieve in spite of the at risk conditions that exist in their lives. At New Concept we realize that we are not going to remove the at risk situation. We are not going to have children move into a better neighborhood. We are not going to help their parents get a job that pays enough income for them to get off welfare. We certainly don't want them to be anything other than what they are and that's black and beautiful. What we do give them are the tools to cope and survive in these high risk situations. We give them self-confidence and we give them hope and aspirations. Last, but most important, we give them dreams.

In social work and educational jargon, dreams are called "positive life options." Again, that is a buzz word created within the last few years to talk about what kids need. The term is new, but the concept is not. Dreams have been around since the beginning of time. My daughter has a favorite movie she likes to watch over and over again called the "Never Ending Story." One of the characters in the movie is a prophet. The prophet is one who knows all and advises others. One of his statements relates to an impending battle between two forces. He tells his people to take away the enemies dreams because the easiest person in the world to control is one who has no dreams. He is right.

We provide services to girls at New Concept that include setting goals and achieving dreams. Each one of these programs provides services to 53 girls who live in Hillside Housing Project. Hillside Housing Project is supposed to be the worst project in the state, certainly in the City of Milwaukee. It is the most at risk community you can live in, but believe me it's nothing compared to the at risk situations existing in other cities. I was in Chicago in Cabrini Green Housing Project and visited their health center. There are 11,000 low income minorities in fifteen-story high-rise project buildings in a five block area of Cabrini Green. They have the chicken wire, they're boarded up, and they're ugly. There is no grass, but there is asphalt. There are fifteen burglaries per day there, that is not a week or a year, that's per day. Those are just the ones that are reported. So when you say that children in Wisconsin are at risk, you have to think that we may be light years ahead of others and from there start with a positive attitude.

Our Teach-One-Reach-One Project has been in existence since 1982. Of the 103 girls that have been in Teach-One-Reach-One most stayed at least three years. We had only three pregnancies. (One was the result of a sexual assault.) We had no school dropouts, no juvenile delinquent charges and all the girls who stayed in our program completed high school on time and continued into postsecondary education, got jobs or went into the military. They did this in spite of their at risk situations because most of them still live in public housing. They have parents who are still single or still unemployed and they are proud of their Afro-American heritage. We gave them the tools to set realistic goals, helped them achieve these goals—and now they are beginning to realize their dreams.

How did we do this? Through trial and error, through recognition of their strengths, rather than their weaknesses, and through respecting their parents and their home environment as we want our own home environments to be respected and recognized.

Teach-One-Reach-One is a prevention program involving role-modeling and group work. The girls who are in it are 7 to 13 years old. When I started the program in 1982, I made some mistakes. I started out with girls ten to fourteen years old. But after a year or so, I realized that if I was going to make an impact on their futures, I had to start earlier than ten years old. By the time these girls reached ten I had to practice intervention instead of prevention. By the time they were ten, many of these girls were sexually active and stopped going to school regularly. They started shoplifting and stealing from their friends in school.

I also realized I had made a mistake in setting the criteria for the role models I wanted to work with these girls. At first I wanted all of them to be professional women under the age of twenty-five. Then I realized that there are many women who are not what we call "professional" who are excellent role models. Some are students, retired women, or homemakers who have raised children successfully.

"Role modeling" and "mentoring" are the new buzz words for programs that people believe will solve all of our youth's problems. The Teach-One-Reach-One program, however, does much more than provide role models and mentors. That is just one component of the program. We provide a very structured group work, individualized counseling to the girls who need it, and ongoing services to the girl and her family. They have to bring their report cards in and maintain a certain grade point average. They have to go to school. They can't be absent from school and still come to Teach-One-Reach-One meetings. The program respects the daily structure and parent rights.

The program is not designed to assign the girl a substitute parent. These girls come from homes where they have a parent, sometimes more than one. Some of these parents are good role models, but most are adults who have not been afforded an opportunity to pursue higher education, get a good job, or experience success in their lives. It may include a family sitting down to dinner together, or going to church, or participating in a social event as a family. I know that our program has been successful not because of the role models, but because we expose our youth to dreams and positive life options. It recognizes their strengths and increases their self-concept and motivation. It makes their parents feel that these girls can achieve. So our role models are charged with exposing these girls to alternative lifestyles, to cultural and educational enrichment experiences, and to their families, which hopefully include a family lifestyle that may be different than what our girls are used to.

The parents are a key component. We must respect their roles. The parents meet and approve of the role model prior to her ever meeting the girl. The role model must keep communicating with the parents about her plans with their child; how she can compliment what is happening in the home, and not to act as a substitute parent. The role model provides an element of exposure, support, and enrichment that the parents may not be able to. However, we should not assume that because a child is at risk, their parents do not care what happens to them. **We need instead to assume that parents of these children care as much about them as you and I care about our children.**

At New Concept we start with the positives and build upon them. The programs I designed at New Concept are successful because I designed them as though they were for my children. I didn't develop a program for a stranger—somebody else's child—I didn't separate my role as parent from my role as director of New Concept. You make some mistakes, but we make mistakes with our own children. Compassion and caring, however, win out over the mistakes everytime. When you hear role model or mentoring programs as being the answer to at risk childrens' problems, insist that it go beyond just matching a child with an adult. Insist that the parent be included in any plan. Insist on role models who will be acceptable for all children regardless of race or income level. Ask whoever is planning the program, "Would you be willing to implement this on a pilot basis in an upper income, middle class, all white neighborhood with all white children? Would the parents of these children, who would most often be white and upper income, be willing to accept the same program you are proposing for these at risk children who are most often low income and minorities? Would these parents allow an unknown adult, who would most often be of a different race and income level, to spend time tutoring their children one-on-one, to become their child's friend and confidante, to share their feelings and become their role model?" If the answers are unequivacably yes, then you can go ahead and start mentoring. If you have to stop and think, assess who is going to benefit and assess the level of respect being given to the parents of the children. Assess what the motives really are.

We must realize that one at risk behavior cannot be separated from others. We must recognize that one may cause the other. People often ask me, "Why does Milwaukee have the highest rate of teen pregnancy among black youth in the nation? Why did over two thousand black girls ages 12-18 get pregnant last year? Why are 98 percent of black teens who get pregnant unmarried? Why is the

infant mortality rate of black babies three times the rate of white babies?" My response is always, why does Milwaukee have such a high rate of school dropouts among black youth? Why does Milwaukee have one of the highest rates of unemployment among black youth in the nation? Why will the enrollment of children in the new alternative school be almost 90 percent black? Why will less than half of all black children who enter high school not graduate? You can't separate teen pregnancy from school dropout or from unemployment. You cannot practice intervention and expect it to be as successful as prevention. You cannot wait until a child drops out of school to try to intervene. You must prevent that child from dropping out.

At New Concept we do a lot of work with teen parents. They are by statute and by our experience, at risk. Their children are at risk from the day they are born. You cannot ask a sixth grade child to mother a baby. It is like mixing oil and water. A fourteen year old cannot be a parent. She doesn't want to stay home and take care of a baby, she wants to go to the rollerskating rink.

In order to provide a sound, effective at risk program for a teen parent you have to recognize the importance of preventing her child from becoming at risk. This may include providing transportation for her to get to school, day care for her child, classes to teach her what to expect as her child develops so she doesn't get frustrated when the baby doesn't walk at six months or talk at nine months. You must recognize that her child is at risk more than any other infant of any other parent. Her child is at risk of being abused and neglected.

Is it the school's responsibility to do all of this? Is it the school's responsibility to provide child care, transportation, and prenatal education? These are the responsibilities of all of us who care about children. I see it as my responsibility to recognize the risks a teen parent is going to experience and then develop programs that meet her needs. I see it as my responsibility to secure funding for programs that meet these needs. I see it as a school's responsibility to support me and other community based agencies in our efforts, and to recognize that others outside the school system may do a job they cannot, or don't want, to do.

I realize that some of the problems of at risk children have been caused by their parents. I realize their community, and even the schools they've attended have caused some of the problems. No one is guilt-free. We are all, at one time or another, perpetrators. The children are the victims.

I think about young people I have seen who drop out of school mentally, even though they go to the school building every day. The school may be the only place they can go to get a meal, to get warm, or to get a person to acknowledge they exist by calling the role in home room in the morning. That may be the only person who calls them by their name. I think about the young people I see in alternative school programs who feel they are being rewarded for <u>not achieving</u> by being put in a program lasting only a few hours a day. That allows them too much free time. I think about the parent who's never been to their child's school, met their child's teacher, or the principal. They have no idea where their child spends all day, five days a week. This child is bussed to an area on a bus line the parent doesn't use.

So what can the schools do and what can I do? We can practice prevention. We can prevent school dropout. We can work together to prevent teen pregnancy. We can help prevent alcohol and other drug abuse. We cannot wait until a child has been absent twenty days to let their parents know that they haven't been coming to school. We have to implement teen pregnancy prevention very early. We have to start at five, six, or seven years old, teaching children to make choices that do not lead to early sexual activity or teen pregnancy. We have to give students skills that increase their chances of getting jobs during the summer, jobs that give them skills to prepare them for a career once they finish high school. We can keep better track of students and if we have a uniform definition and a core concept that can be used by all school districts and all states to define what a dropout is, so that we are all talking about the same thing.

We can also look at what is working in other schools. For example, a school described in Orangeburg, South Carolina is making progress. They have turned the children's behavior around almost completely. I was really distressed to see that this school, which is down south in supposedly a backward state, in a community with a much bleaker economic outlook than Milwaukee, has only a 4 percent teen pregnancy rate. I was distressed because I know that the teen pregnancy rate at North Division High School in Milwaukee is not 4 percent, but 40 percent.

Some unorthodox methods were tried in Orangeburg. Teachers were recruited from professions other than education and put in a classroom on a trial basis while they went back to school at their own expense to get credentials or certification. The computer teacher did not go to college in education, he went to school in computer technology. He was recruited from IBM. Merit raises are available to teachers who show they have made a difference. School superintendents can be fired if there is not documented success in reaching the goals for achievement and lowering the at risk level of their schools. Unions have made concessions to allow things to happen that were never allowed before. These changes have made a difference. They didn't come easily and they didn't happen overnight. They came as a result of planning.

We cannot afford to have a bargain basement budget for our schools and our children. We cannot ignore the greatest resource we have. Our children must be nurtured. They must be respected and their parents must be respected. We must plan for them just as I would for my children and as you would plan for your children. You must realize that a child spends more time at school during his waking hours than he does at home. Teachers are role models that have a great impact on their lives. I remember all the teachers I had from first grade on, and I remember them positively because they had an impact on my life; they were my role models. I didn't need a role model program. Nobody did. Our teachers were our mentors. They wanted us to achieve and they helped us do that.

There are also some positive terms you've used to describe our children. They are wondering and giving, learning and challenged, good, hopeful, surviving, and changing. The list I read first was much longer and much bleaker. You are right in your assessment as to what is happening. But don't give up. We cannot always remove the at risk situations, but we can always do something for a child who has to exist within that situation.

I would like to end with some "whys" and some "what ifs."

- Why do teachers and principals and administrators send their children to private schools? What if this was not allowed? What if teachers were required to send their children to the school system that employed them?

- Why is education the only branch of government that for the last twenty years has tripled its budget and decreased its output of high quality products by more than 50 percent?

- What if the school administrators had a loaned executive from a successful business in that community to work with them on day-to-day basis to implement management strategies and quality control within their building and among their staff?

- Why are principals and students stuck with teachers that don't want to teach and who can't teach? Why are teachers stuck with principals and administrators who hide in their offices and give no guidance and direction?

- What if merit raises were available to teachers whose students were prepared to compete with any student from any school, not only in the city, but worldwide and come out a winner?

- What if principals who can motivate their staff to do a good job could fire those who don't and replace them with a person with experience and the knowledge that they need even though they may have to be hired on a interim basis while they go back to school to become certified?

- Why do parents not know until it is too late that their child is truant and on the road to becoming a dropout? Why are parents so removed from this system?

- What if our computer technology could implement a system that could automatically generate a phone call or a letter to a parent whose child is absent more than two days consecutively or more than five days a semester? What if a return phone call or a letter to acknowledge that they are aware of this situation was required?

- What if, as in many private schools and in some public schools, parents were required to pick up report cards and required to attend parent teacher conferences?

- Why are we constantly revising curriculums? Why are we putting the same thing in a different package? What if we started over in deciding what we need to be teaching by asking adults from all walks of life, "What did you get out of school that had an impact on your success? What is it that you missed?

- Why do we allow schools to process students and not educate them?

- What if the governor of this state, like the governor of South Carolina, could fire a school superintendent who didn't spend money wisely, who did not produce a superior product, and whose students dropped out?

A business that continues to produce an inferior product goes out of business. The person who runs that business fires the people responsible for producing an inferior product. Sometimes the chief executive officer is fired. What if school personnel, starting with superintendents and going all the way to teachers, were retained or given raises based on their ability to produce a superior product?

I'd like to end with what I think is our charge. It comes from *The Prophet* and it speaks to us of children: "You may give them your love but not your thoughts. Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself. They come through you, but not from you and though they are with you yet, they belong not to you. They have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies, but not their souls. For their souls grow in the house of tomorrow which you cannot visit even in your dreams."

"An Agenda for Children—Analyzing the Past and Shaping the Future"

Herbert J. Grover
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

At the outset of his address, Superintendent Grover argued that the major issue which must be faced by policymakers is child-centeredness. As a society, we must once more place children, rather than personal success, at the center of our lives. Doing so may give us the will to develop a safety net to ensure the nurturing, enhancement, and reinforcement of all children.

Current trends in our society, however, make doing so extraordinarily difficult. Economic factors are reducing the earning power of the working and middle classes and are interfering with our ability to nurture all children. Governmental policies in regard to health care and unemployment insurance further exacerbate the precarious position of our young.

The economic difficulties faced by increasing numbers of families have an unavoidable impact on public education. The problems these children bring from home inhibit the ability of the school to teach. If we wish to improve the schools, we must address the social conditions that impinge on school attainment.

Not to invest in America's children would be economic stupidity and a moral blunder. Without a properly trained workforce, our industries will be unable to compete in the world market. Furthermore, the decline in our commitment to the education of all youth could jeopardize the stability of the middle class. The well-being of our nation depends on providing access to the economic security that the middle class represents. Public education plays a fundamental role in this process of preserving the middle class. It is imperative that schools and human service agencies be given adequate funding.

This is a special time for children in America. Our children are hurting. Our children have not received the nurturing, love, care, and affirmation that they need to succeed in school. In 1985, we knew. The Department of Public Instruction and its agency budget advanced the Children At Risk legislation. Through the process of legislative review and ultimately enactment, we passed one of the finest at risk pieces of legislation of any of the states of the nation. We have worked with that piece of legislation for some time now. It seemed not only that the legislation was appropriate, but as we worked with it we found that glitches developed. So now there is a need to review the legislation. There is a need to expand the collective energies of other agencies and other providers around the common bonding that must develop for the children of this state to succeed in school. And so we gather here today, collectively working at a conference with external funding, because this is an issue that is not a Wisconsin issue, but a national issue. We ask ourselves, can we do more? Can we develop a safety net for children to make sure, regardless of where they find themselves placed on this earth, that they will not fall through the cracks of society? That, in fact, they will be nurtured, enhanced, embellished, and reinforced so that when they are placed in our educational institutions, they can succeed. We need the help of the Department of Health and Social Services. We need the help of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations. We need the help of many other educational institutions around the issue of child-centeredness. This is a major issue that we face in America right now.

We at the Department of Public Instruction have gone through a year of celebrating the Year of the Family in Education, a year of celebrating the family and children. We know that there is one thing that we can change that would make a difference in the lives of children. It is the family condition in America. We can't wave that magic wand and have all of that happen—at least not immediately. We know that our children present the schools with great emotional needs, great nutritional needs, and great security needs. So this will be the Year of the Child in Wisconsin, a year to celebrate our children.

I think we have to look at children differently in our society. They are not my children or your children, or a neighbor's child. They are collectively the children of the neighborhood, of the community, of the state, and of the nation. In a broader context, we must judge each other differently. Our first measure of success should be how our children turn out, not whether you have a BMW or whether you have been on the latest Carribbean cruise, or whether you have designer clothes or whether you have a second home up north. How did your children turn out? I'm not talking about doctors, and lawyers, or engineers, I'm talking about hardworking, dedicated, conscientious, civicly responsible, humane, good American citizens. That must be the measure of the success of the individual, and increasingly it must be the measure of success for our generation.

How are we treating our children? The children who have been placed on the planet Earth; the children who are, in fact, the end product of our own statement—how did our children turn out? Right now the report card in America is not wholesome. I was watching TV one Sunday morning and I saw David Broder, the syndicated columnist, interview one of the presidential pretenders, and he said to the presidential pretender, "You have been in many lofty positions in government in America. You've held prestigious positions of long duration in your professional career. I have a quiz for you on the American condition. The presidential pretender said, "Fine, let her go." So David Broder said, "The first question I have for you is, how many million Americans do not have health care benefits?" The presidential pretender said, "I really wouldn't have that statistic, but we have the finest health care system in the world and on top of that we don't want socialized medicine like they have in Great Britain." David Broder said, "There are 35,000,000 Americans who do not have health care benefits and 15 million of those are children." In the second question for the presidential pretender he said, "What percentage of the American workers do not have unemployment benefit compensation?" The candidate said, "I really wouldn't have that statistic, 50 percent?" David Broder said, "No, 30 percent of American workers do not have unemployment benefits compensation through their employment." Third question for the presidential pretender by David Broder: "Mr. Candidate, what is the chance of a child being born in poverty today in America?" The candidate said, "Well, I really wouldn't know. It seems to me that we ought to have programs to make sure that that doesn't happen." David Broder said, "One in five children are born into poverty today in America."

It struck me that we had somebody seeking the highest office in the land who probably flies from Las Vegas to Hollywood to Washington, D.C., to an exclusive suburb, and when he is confronted with very fundamental questions about the condition of American society, he hasn't been there and understood what is happening to America's children. He hasn't understood the struggles of the middle class and the potential institutionalization of an underclass that will come home to haunt us all. We pay now or pay later.

I was watching TV another Sunday morning and I heard a professor from the University of Minnesota-Duluth talk about the engineering program they have there. In that engineering program only two of the ten professors were American nationals. Eight of the ten came from other countries. "Where is America's brainpower?" he asked. Why aren't we recreating our own intellectual capital so that we can not only sustain the fundamental freedoms, privileges, rights, and responsibilities that come with a free people, but also compete economically with other societies that are very child-centered and very formidable in terms of their educational attainment.

Well, I was watching TV a third Sunday morning and I heard a salesman say that cars were selling for over $30,000. The real fancy jobbers that they are producing today are selling like hotcakes. The cars that were in the $14-15,000 class aren't moving so quickly off the lots. I wondered what all of that meant, whether in our tax structure we have created great pockets of affluence at the top. We are asserting a tax structure that uniquely works against the middle class and ultimately leads to deprivation and imposition upon the underclass in our society. One doesn't have to look far to see that it is all around us. When Andy Warhol's journal goes for $30,000 we have to ask ourselves if we have

created frivolities around a purchasing mentality and around pockets of affluence in a time when our national tax structure works against investment in children.

And please note that our state tax structure has done the same. We went from 11 percent in the upper tax bracket for income tax in Wisconsin to 6.9 percent and we are celebrating around that. I say, "Celebrating about what?" Who will pay for tomorrow's future? Who will invest in the children and their families when they are hurting from the lack of love and the nurturing that is necessary for them to be accomplished people. Won't we do it for the great Wisconsin tradition of progressive taxation? So we are struggling right now. It's an ethics question to me; a moral question in America and in Wisconsin. It is a question of whether or not we will collectively make the right kinds of decisions around children. Will we come out swinging for children through our democratic process front end and invest rather than back out and pay out when the crisis is upon us—when our children pass through a system and receive diplomas that are not significant? Will they have more certificates of attendance and not the skills that allow them to participate in the emerging technological informational age that is uniquely challenging to all of us? Certainly that must be the consequence.

But I see a confusion of ethics, this sleaze factor. We have this "me" generation, this yuppie mentality. We have this, "I'll take for today and my neighbor be damned and my neighbor's children. After all they don't influence my life." That mentality is wrong. They will influence your life. You will pay for it one way or another.

We can't have a third of America's children growing up in a Third World condition while we declare that the institution, the democracy, the republic are in good order. We can't have children born in Washington, D.C., who in the first year of life have less of a chance of survival than children born in Trinidad, Costa Rica, and Cuba. That says a lot about what kind of people we are. Now, I was talking to a kindergarten teacher recently: The children were in a circle and the teacher said to the children, "Go around the circle and tell us what your mama does. She came to one little boy and he said, "I don't know what my mama does." Another boy in the group said, "Well, why don't you know what your mother does?" "I don't know what my mother does because I live with my grandmother." The second little boy asked, "Why do you live with your grandmother?" He said, "I live with my grandmother because my mother doesn't want me." I thought, my goodness what a terrible position to place that child in. A child at the kindergarten level had to tell his peers that his mother didn't want him. I thought back to my own kindergarten experience and how big my kindergarten teacher seemed to me. She was 5' 2." I believed everything she told me.

How sensitive and impressionable we were at that age as the environment around you just captured you with the life and the energy and all of the things that were part of growing up. I thought about how you felt if you didn't get picked first for pompom pullaway or capture the flag or chase the deer—that was a game we made up. I thought about how it felt when you didn't get invited to your best friend's birthday party and the powerful statement about rejection that child was freed to make in front of his peers. You see that that is not unusual, is it? No, it is not. I came to the Department of Public Instruction one day and there was an employee there, a grandmother who had a little child with her. I said to the little girl, "What grade are you in? Are you in fourth grade?" She said, "No, I'm in first grade." And I said, "What school are you going to?" and then grandma had to explain that mommy and daddy had problems and they didn't want to take her to school. That little girl had to listen to all of that at 7:30 in the morning.

A couple of weeks ago I was sitting in the local service station—I like to put my overalls on and take the edge off, get off of my island, and surround myself with reality. I listen to the experts as they come in to the service station. They talk about the weather, trout fishing, whether or not crops should be planted, and of course, there is some moaning and groaning about the state of the state and the state of the nation. I come to find my relaxation.

I encountered this precious little boy who was with his grandfather at the service station and I said, "What is two plus two?" and he said, "Four." I said, "What is four plus four?" and he said, "Eight." I said, "What is five plus three?" and he was going on and on. I said, "What grade are you in? Are you in second grade?" He said, "No. I'm in kindergarten." "You're pretty smart for kindergarten," I said, "Gimme five." So I gave him a dime and he bought some bubblegum. He was opening it up and all of a sudden, out of the clear blue sky, with about four or five of us sitting around, he said, "I ain't got no daddy." None of us wanted to ask the next question. We just froze and we didn't talk about it anymore.

That's the condition for a lot of our children. That's what we inherit in the schools and that works against their attainment and their accomplishment; their strength and vitality, and the list goes on.

The Children's Defense Fund Material is just outstanding.

- How many Americans are poor? Thirty-two million.
- How many children are poor? Thirteen million. They make up the poorest age group in America.
- Does a minimum wage job lift a family above the poverty line? No! A minimum wage job equals about 71 percent of the poverty line for a family of four. They can't make it as a family living off a minimum wage and having children. It doesn't work in America very well right now.
- How many Americans lack health insurance? Thirty-seven million.
- What percentage of preschool children have mothers in the labor force? Almost half.
- Where does America rank among twenty industrialized nations in infant mortality? Last.
- How many American teens gave birth in 1985? Half a million.

We can't have those statistics much longer anymore. Hopefully, "The Children In Need Report" is a document that you buy into. I read it from cover to cover and I didn't find anything objectionable. I believe it all. You will hear more details about the report from Chancellor Shalala who is vice chair of this task force. You will hear her statement around this important research. By the way, you will note that the supporters of this report read like "Who's Who in American Business". Fred Butler, the past president of Proctor and Gamble, said that for us to fail to invest in America right now and, in particular, to invest in at risk children is not only economic stupidity, it is a moral blunder. It is a moral issue.

The report has all sorts of nifty stuff in it. It says, if the present trend continues without corrective action, American businesses will confront a severe employment crisis. The scarcity of well-educated and well-qualified people in the work force will seriously damage this country's competitive position in an increasingly challenging global marketplace. Current projections find a serious labor shortage in only two years. By 1990, the impact of new technologies will drive total private sector demand for employment to 156.6 million jobs, nearly twice that of 1978. These estimates are only close to the mark. Our industries will be unable to grow and compete because of an expanding educational underclass. They will be unable to meet the demands of such jobs. More of these young people will not enjoy the levels of literacy needed to make informed choices about their lives or to carry out the responsibilities and reap the rewards of citizenship in a democratic society. They also say that any plans for improvement in the education of disadvantaged children that do not recognize the need for additional resources over a sustained period, are doomed for failure. We need to invest now as opposed to paying later. The list goes on.

We are engaging in a common struggle around children, our children, America's children. The Children's Defense Fund provides these statistics on what happens in one day in the lives of American children:

- 16,201 will get pregnant—2,753 of them are teenagers
- 1,099 teenagers have abortions
- 377 teenagers miscarry
- 1,287 teenagers give birth
- 666 babies are born to women who have inadequate prenatal care
- 695 babies are born with low birth weight, less than 5 pounds 9 ounces
- 44 babies born that are of low birth, are less than 3 pounds 5 ounces
- 72 babies die before one month of life
- 110 babies die before their first birthday
- 27 children die because of poverty
- 9 children die from guns
- 5 teens commit suicide
- 849 teens become sexually active
- 609 teens get syphillis or gonnorrhea
- 1,868 teens drop out of high school
- 988 children are abused
- 3,288 run away from home
- 1,736 are in adult jails
- 2,269 are born out of wedlock
- 2,987 children see the parents divorce
- 36,000 people lose their jobs

We can't have these statistics much longer. In our time of fiscal stringencies and economic uncertainty, there is a struggle in America for the soul of schooling. That struggle is taking place right now. It is a question of whether or not the good hearts prevail. It is a question of whether or not those that are child-centered prevail. Or whether or not there is significant institutional reallocation. Whether or not those who have the power will invest in the human potential and the human capital of our society as opposed to "take and take and take," and in so doing create pockets of unique wealth.

This country must struggle with its own economic security because our children have not been nurtured and educated strongly enough. They say that this is the only society in the world in which the real income of old people has been rising faster than the real income of working people. They say the real incomes of 80 percent of all Americans will have declined from where they stood in 1977. There is a way to avoid this, however, and it is to be rich. The Congressional Budget Office estimates

that just 10 percent of families will see their incomes grow 16 percent and just one percent will enjoy an increase of 50 percent. This is amazing. Not only that, but the Congressional Budget Office says that one-tenth of Americans now pay 20 percent more of their earnings in federal taxes while the richest 10 percent pay 20 percent less than they did in 1977. We can't have that data much longer. We're in the potential of losing the middle class in America. Wasn't the American dream seen through a vision of strong common school educational opportunity equally advanced to all of the children? We could all compete fairly in one institution, the common school for the common people for the common good.

We thought we could ascend into the middle class and buy our part of America to have a piece of the action. The heritage of this great country was in the strength of its middle class and yet we now have one percent of the people owning 36 percent of America's wealth. If we lose the middle class we lose everything. The middle class is the rock upon which this country's stability rests. With its massive tax dollars, with even bigger consumerism, the middle class now not only supplies our national wealth but also provides the great gray, law-abiding, plotting, social shock absorber that makes the U.S. the most stable country in the world. Faced with war, depression, or social clamor, the middle class remains largely unruffled. Resisting change even as it slowly accommodates change, paying the bills, and generally getting on with the steadiness of life.

So you are here today to help us plan for the future and create the best environment across institutions around Wisconsin children, to create the concept of child-centeredness in the state. We understand the issues of day care, minimum wages, of health care, alcohol and drug abuse, adult literacy, vouchers, four-year old preschool, teen pregnancy, and the family condition. All of these issues affect the attainment levels of our children. One institution, the school, cannot deal with the issue selectively and alone. We need you to criticize, to develop, to imagine and to create the at risk concept, to create the kinds of institutional interactions that will make sure that we can put a circuit breaker in the student population out there. We need to take it down the road to gather collectively. We need to make a strong statement to the providers that the resources and programs must be there for the children. Out of this good moment we hope to win this special challenge. We have always done that because we are free and once we have the information and once we have the challenge, we get about doing the task. That's the uniqueness of society. We will get the providers to make sure that there is a front-end investment in children rather than just constant articulation of the final end of the educational process for children.

It always amazes me that when our children are gone, our own children grow up and move to the university, a job, or set up their own home, how we immediately say the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree. We have a lot of young people who are succeeding well in our schools and our universities, and I would submit to you that it is because they have had a quality elementary and secondary education. But we have too many who have fallen through the cracks. I would submit to you that it is a broader condition in our society that impacts on the ability of the schools to teach. In the Year of the Child in Wisconsin we will be child centered. From the variations in the stories that we hear out there in the schools as we talk to elementary teachers and talk about the kinds of distraught and emotional condition children bring to the schools, we can see that we must all sacrifice to create the children of tomorrow. The presidential pretenders must speak to the child issue more strongly in America. If we fail to do this, we will live in a condition where society will literally have to make a declaration of a lower standard of living. We will have great variance in our economic circumstances and ultimately that results in a special negative condition which impinges upon the American dream.

A special conference, yes, you were invited because you are special. We appreciate your contributions and out of this project will come fine-tuning on the at risk legislation. Through this we can make the Year of the Child in Wisconsin not only a statement, but one of fulfillment.

"Responding Effectively to Children at Risk"

Gary G. Wehlage
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University ofWisconsin-Madison

Professor Wehlage argued that it is important to deflect attention away from the characteristics of at risk youth and focus on the ways schools can be altered to lower dropout rates. He reviewed historical efforts to improve school retention and indicated that since the turn of the century there has been an ongoing debate about who should be blamed for school failure. His and other research suggests that there is much schools can do to alleviate the dropout problem.

Wehlage's recent study of fourteen dropout prevention programs has presented schools that concern themselves about extending school membership the feeling of being a vital part of a school to all their students in order to demonstrate higher retention rates.

Such membership is fostered when teachers express a willingness to help students with their personal problems, provide active assistance in meeting the requirements of the institution and the larger society, and establish a link between the student's future and his current educational experiences. For their part, students must exhibit respect for teachers and peers and be willing to work at the task of learning.

There are four impediments to school membership that educational institutions can address: lack of adjustment, isolation, incongruity, and difficulty. Schools successful in working with at risk youth have developed programs that diminish the impact of these impediments. For example, lack of adjustment to the competitiveness and impersonality of many high schools was overcome at one school through the use of weekly "family" meetings. Academic difficulties in other schools were addressed through changes in the school calendar, allowing for shorter grading periods, or concentrating on two intensively taught subjects per semester.

Questions/Answers

Members of the audience asked several questions after Wehlage's presentation. Two concerned the training and support of teachers who work with at risk children. Wehlage admitted that little is known about how teacher training programs can assist with this process; successful teachers of at risk youth appear to "occur naturally." He suggested, however, that districts use the talents of these teachers in training other school personnel.

School conditions, can support or hinder the work of effective teachers of at risk youth. Conditions that encourage more face-to-face contact and the development of long-term teacher-student relations appear to be important characteristics of successful programs. Because of their size and fragmented programs, however, large comprehensive high schools often work in opposition to the membership Wehlage finds important.

In 1986, the University of Wisconsin received a large grant from the Department of Education. This grant created the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools. As a researcher at the Center, I and other staff members conducted a national search of effective programs which work with at risk youth and studied them intensively for a year. We found 14 schools we thought presented interesting, successful and promising examples of what could be done. We selected schools in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Madison, Oakland, and Albuquerque. The schools contained a rich diversity of black, white, American Indian, and Hispanic students.

We gathered two kinds of data during the school year. One type was quantitative data consisting of academic achievement tests; we looked at reading and writing skills; we looked at personal and social

orientations, for example self esteem and social bonding, focusing on control and orientation to the future.

We also gathered qualitative data, interviews and observations. Five researchers spent at least three weeks in each of the 14 schools, doing interviews and observing classrooms. From these observations we have produced a book we hope will contribute to our understanding of at risk children and the programs we must develop for them.

I think the book will provide help in three areas. First, it will provide practioners with descriptions of effective programs. Second, we provide policy implications at the state and local level for dealing with at risk children. Finally, we provide a "theory of dropout prevention," which we see as a very practical tool for both practioners and policy makers.

We began our research with a very simple question: **Can schools prevent kids from dropping out?** Surprisingly, this is a controversial question. If you go back to the turn of the century, for example, the dropout rate from elementary schools was greater than 50 percent. People said, Can schools do a better job? One side said, "Yes, they can" and the other side said, "Schools really can't do much with these kids because they come from poor homes and from cultures which don't value education."

The argument still goes on: to what extent can schools really deal effectively with at risk kids? Chester Finn, Assistant Secretary of Education, recently published an article on the high school drop out problem. He argued that it's the problem of the home, the family, and the community, not the school. Finn points out that nearly every study correlates dropping out with low socioeconomic class, minority status, low test scores and grades, and dissatisfaction with school. Finn states, "Along with hapless demographics and lagging education achievement, dropouts have a third set of characteristics, misbehavior of various sorts. . . ." "The symptom is not likely to be eradicated by school-based remedies, in so far as dropping out is a manifestation of linked social pathologies and inherited characteristics. It's more like going on welfare or committing a crime than like the commonplace problems of school effectiveness."

We took the opposite point of view in our research. **Our hypothesis was: Schools can be a crucial factor in whether kids drop out or not.**

Recent research on drop outs also contributes to the notion that the primary causes are the social and personal characteristics of young people. The pattern among researchers has been to examine dropouts in terms of their personal and social characteristics. This approach, not without its legitimacy, suggests these are the only reasons children dropout. By focusing exclusively on personal and social characteristics, it appears that dropouts are deviant, deficient, or negligent. This focus contributes to what we call the "pathological view of at risk kids." In 1965, Cervantes did a major study on high school dropouts in this country. Cervantes was from the University of California-Berkeley. He claimed to have discovered a variant breed of teenager. They were social problems who were clumsily dysfuntional in a computer precise, machine-oriented, communication saturated society. He developed a bipolar set of characteristics comparing the dropout with the graduate. These characteristics are listed below:

- dropout-instinctoid; holistic for the graduate
- radical vs. conservative
- class bound for dropouts, upwardly mobile for the graduate
- proletarian vs. capitalistic

- affectless vs. affectionate
- hyperactive vs. alert
- leisure and thrill-oriented vs. occupation and goal oriented
- sexually exploiting vs. monogomous
- double standard vs. single standard
- pawn of environment vs. master of environment for the graduate

This is an example of the kind of research that has been done.

Major studies done in the 1960s and 1970s focused on characteristics of students. They did not ask the question we are trying to ask: can schools make a difference in whether kids drop out or not? These previous studies don't ask whether schools can be more or less effective in preventing kids from dropping out. They do not ask whether schools themselves may be part of the problem. Instead, it appears that the school as an institution is healthy, rational, and performing appropriately for students, except for a few deviants who don't, won't, or can't fit into the system.

More recently, a major study has been written by Coleman and Halford titled, *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities*. They used the *High School and Beyond* database, a national study of high school youth between 1980 and 1984. In their study they focused on the differences between Catholic and Public Schools. Their findings indicate that some schools are more effective than others in reducing the dropout rate.

Coleman and Halford used four characteristics to define at risk students: minority status, poverty, students from families with a structural or functional deficiency, and students with scholastic or behavioral problems. If we look at the dropout rates and compare Catholic vs. public schools, we see some fairly dramatic differences. For example, among black students, the dropout rate in public schools is 17.2 percent. For Catholic schools, it is 4.6 percent. Among Hispanics, the dropout rate in public schools is 19.1 percent. In Catholic schools it is 9.3 percent. Among students who live in poverty, the public school dropout rate is 22.3 percent. In Catholic schools the rate is 14 percent. Among students from families with varying degrees of functional or structural deficiencies, public schools have a 24 percent dropout rate, Catholic schools have 4.1 percent rate. Among students with an academic problem, those who have below a C average in the public schools have a 37 percent dropout rate. It is about 22 percent in Catholic schools.

My point is not to make a case for Catholic schools, but rather to make the case that schools <u>can</u> be effective with students we normally describe as at risk (based on race, poverty, some kind of family problem or academic problem). The questions we then must ask are: "Why must our schools be more effective?" and "How can we make them more effective?"

From our investigation we uncovered one particular category that became part of our dropout prevention theory. We call it **school membership**.

By "school membership" we mean more than just enrollment in school. "School membership" is a social bond between the school and the student. School membership requires the student and school to establish a reciprocal relationship based on an exchange of commitments. The theory hypothesizes that school membership is promoted by the following kinds of adult practices: first, adults must actively create positive and respectful relations with students; second, they must communicate concern about and provide direct help to students with their individual problems; third, they must provide active help in meeting school standards. In other words, help students cut the mustard

academically; fourth, they must help students identify a place in society based on a link between self, school and one's future.

In exchange for this energetic commitment on behalf of adults, students must provide their own commitment. First, positive and respectful behavior toward adults and peers. Second, a level of physical and mental activity that makes their own achievement likely and commitment from adults rewarding.

Our notion of school membership is derived in part from research on college dropouts done by Vincent Tinto. He discovered that the amount of time a student spent in college depended on their personal commitment to acquiring a college education. The student brought this disposition to school.

This disposition, however, is strengthened or weakened during college primarily by the student's interaction with the institution. According to Tinto, voluntary departure from college is due more to the institutional experience after a student arrives than to prior experiences, preparation and strength of the individual's dispositions.

This is an extremely important point because it suggests the institution is an active agent in encouraging or discouraging continuation. We found precisely the same thing in our study of at risk kids in public high schools. **The relationship with the institution and the strength of the commitment of the institution to the kids is the crucial deciding point or deciding line on whether the kids stays or drops out.**

There is a clear comparison between Tinto's research on college students and our's on high school. We categorized our findings about the relationship between student and school into what we call four impediments to school membership. These impediments are: *adjustment, difficulty, incongruence,* and *isolation*. The proactive role for the school is in helping students overcome these impediments.

Adjustment

Not surprisingly, we found that a lot of students had difficulty adjusting to high school. The expectations and demands in high school were very different from junior high. The teachers were different. Some teachers tried to make kids act more adult while others were trying to keep kids acting more infantile.

There is a fragmented curriculum in most schools. In other words, one course has nothing to do with another. A student goes from Period One to Period Two to Three without any connection. There is competitiveness and impersonality. All these things can cause "problems of adjustment." Schools can either exaggerate these conditions or help kids overcome them.

One of our programs has specifically gone after the problem of adjustment. The program uses a very simple device called a "family meeting" each week. A frank discussion of problems is a part of each meeting. Teachers talk to students with difficulties they may be having, e.g., How can we help you respond to those difficulties? What is on your mind? What is troubling you? Why are you depressed? Can we help you in some way? This type of counseling is much different from the large comprehensive high school where kids may not get any counseling at all.

Difficulty

This second category refers to difficulty with academic affairs. Students we saw who were at risk often needed more time, more coaching, and more frequent monitoring. They simply needed more help to master the academic material.

In many large comprehensive high schools, you either "sink or swim." "It may be difficult, but it's up to you to get it." The teachers give it and the students are there to get it. But some students don't get it. As a result they develop academic problems and eventually drop out.

The notion of "difficulty" also has a more subtle dimension to it. Put simply, kids are bored in school and as a result find it difficult to sustain the kind of effort that they need to succeed. One school we studied incorporated a five-one-five program into the curriculum. This program created blocks of time five weeks long with one week of vacation. The kids go to school the same amount of time. They start earlier in the fall and finish later in June. They end up with the same number of days in school, but their course material is broken up into manageable units. The kids could sustain effort for five weeks at a time and get through a unit of work even if it was difficult.

Another school we studied, a comprehensive high school, taught two major courses at a time. It condensed the academic work and allowed kids to concentrate on two subjects. They ended up taking the same number of credits for the same amount of time. Because of this, they were able to get more personalized help.

Incongruence

"Incongruence" refers to the cultural conflict between student and school. Not surprisingly we found that most of the kids at risk were part of a low income family. But there were other types of outsiders; kids described as punkers, heavy metal, kids who were different in some way. They didn't fit into the school. They did not see the school as their school. There was an incongruence between their view of themselves, where they were going, and what the school represented. **They were foreigners in their own school.**

Here's how one school in California handled the problem of incongruence.

The "Media Academy" is a program involving 100 kids. They are all black and Hispanic inner-city students. Most of them don't see the school as part of their equation for a better future.

The "Media Academy" was created to focus academic work on electronic and print media. Students majored in media for three years. They were able to produce two newspapers: a school newspaper and a Spanish-English language paper for the small community around the school. They were involved in activities involving professional media people in the community. They linked up with the Oakland Tribune, the radio stations, TV stations, and advertising specialists. The "incongruence" was reduced because academics meant something connected to the real world. They could see that learning to read, and write, and think critically made sense. They took an active role in their own education.

Isolation

We're not referring to isolation from peers, but rather **isolation from adults.** As family breakdowns occur, as there is a breakdown in the community and the strength of traditional community institutions, kids have less and less contact with strong adults, adults who represent stability and can help give a sense of the future.

In his research, Tinto found that one of the most powerful predictors of students dropping out of college was a lack of relationship with strong adults in the university community. Schools we studied

seem to have developed a variety of formal and informal ways of creating student and teacher contact. Teachers play an extended role; in addition to being a teacher of algebra or history, they were also counselors and advisors. Some of the best counseling going on in the schools went on informally by regular classroom teachers who had a sense of how to talk to kids about their personal problems and about their futures. Because they were willing to play this extended role, they filled communication gaps that were going unmet in students' homes.

Conclusion

Schools can play a major role in reducing the at risk factor and number of dropouts by adhering to the concept of "school membership." School membership is bound to academic engagement and academic achievement. We have always taken school membership for granted. The kinds of impediments I have just described have often not existed for some kids because of other strengths in their lives. When those strengths are removed, the only agency or institution that is able to fill in is the school. So if we look at the evidence, we can see that there is a pattern, a theoretical or conceptual way of looking at this. We can argue that schools can do a better job with at risk kids. In fact, schools can prevent dropping out.

Question 1: Can teachers be encouraged to be more effective with at risk youth?

Answer: Yes. Teachers we saw in our research are not encouraged to be this way by a university. These skills occur naturally. However, a lot of things must happen to encourage teachers to take on this kind of role.

In order to create the kind of face-to-face relationships that stimulate school membership for kids and facilitates this counseling role for teachers, we have got to have small-sized schools. We've got to maintain intimacy and constancy of contact. Large comprehensive schools, (2,000 kids), are impersonal. It is hard for teachers to get to know kids. It is hard for kids to feel they can relate to adults because of the constant movement emphasized.

At risk kids are often labeled as failures and troublemakers. Teachers, however, were quite optimistic about the possibility of these kids to learn. Their sense of professional accountability gives them the desire to be successful with at risk children. There are two kinds of teachers. One kind says, "I'm here to give it to the kids and it is their responsibility to get it." It is an insensitive approach to teaching. The other kind of teacher says, "It is my responsibility to make sure the kids get it." There is a lot more of that kind of teacher in small alternative programs.

Question 2: Why all this emphasis on the diploma? Is that really a measure of a "good citizen?"

Answer: Just having a diploma does not make one a good citizen, parent, or worker. The end result of education should be more than academic achievement. We often make judgments about the quality of education across the country based on the SAT or ACT score published every year in the paper. It is a big deal. Wisconsin is near the top but we all know there is more to education than high test scores. We need to look at the social and personal development that makes one a good citizen, parent, and worker. These are elusive characteristics, but there are ways schools can introduce kids to these issues.

Question 3: Catholic schools can kick out undesirable students. Does it make sense to compare Catholic and public schools on this issue?

Answer: It is a myth that Catholic schools can push out undesirable students into the public schools. In effect, they do a much better job of retaining and succeeding with tough kids. My point in using the

Catholic school research is to provide an analogy which says there are schools that can be effective with these kids and that we ought to recognize that as a real possibility for the public schools.

Question 4: Did you observe examples of successful programs that have a strong community involvement?

Answer: Our community partnership model develops very tightly integrated systems involving business, social services, higher education, and labor unions to provide a comprehensive package of services for at risk youth. The goal is to increase the resources schools have by coordinating their efforts with business, industry,and social services. I think that is the way of the future, especially in large communities. There are currently efforts to fund these kind of programs in Little Rock, Dayton, Lawrence, Savannah, and Pittsburgh to implement a comprehensive, community package of coordinated services and efforts. In Pittsburgh, for example, program kids are promised jobs at graduation.

Question 5: What are your thoughts on alternative programs?

Answer: Many school systems develop small, side programs they hope will go away. They represent a release valve for the system. These alternative schools and programs should be the focus of more resources and status, including the provision for teacher inservice training so that a broader base of faculty can learn how to deal with at risk children.

"Children in Need—The Report of the Committee on Economic Development"

Donna E. Shalala, Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Using the Committee on Economic Development and its recent publication, Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged, Chancellor Shalala concentrated on two primary questions: (1) How does one shape national and state policies to address such issues? and (2) What shape should those policies take?

In developing national and state policies, Shalala emphasized involving the business community in the social, economic, and educational needs of the poorest children. Only in this way will the broad public support required to fund adequate programs be developed.

Second, involving business leaders in a study of this issue gives them an opportunity to see the problem in their own terms and bring their influence to bear on an important national problem.

Third, concentrating on early intervention programs that have proven successful in preventing future educational failure (e.g., pre-natal programs and Head Start), allows us to link health and welfare issues to education. Establishing this connection is imperative if we are to address the needs of the most at risk children.

Shalala then reviewed the primary recommendations of the CED report. They include prevention through early intervention; the restructuring of schools with a focus on greater teacher autonomy and school-based management; and the development of retention and reentry programs that combine work experience and academic remediation.

She pointed out that the CED report is different from other recent reform reports in its assertion that the federal government must play a central role in dealing with the needs of our poorest children. Chapter I funding must be continued if states and municipalities are to address these issues effectively. To garner the continued support of the business community in regard to this kind of lobbying, however, it is imperative that educators be able to demonstrate results. This will only come through improved data collection and research and development.

Questions/Answers

One person asked about the potential conflict between the excellence movement and the development of programs for at risk children. Shalala said that we must be willing to set high standards and then build support structures that allow people to meet those standards. The needs of minority students are rarely academic, she said. They are related to financial and emotional problems.

When asked whether developing programs for this population would require new funds or reallocating existing resources, Shalala said both strategies would have to be pursued and that we should not pretend that we can do what needs to be done without new money. Such money should be tied to strategies that make sense.

One questioner asked about the link between chemical dependency and at risk children. Shalala said that although little attention has been paid to this issue, it will be important to consider in the future.

She concluded by saying that only when public schools teachers and administrators, human service agency personnel, and representatives from institutions of higher education come together as colleagues will they develop strategies that promise to improve the condition and futures of at risk children.

Bert Grover and I share a commitment to children at risk and to doing what we can to strengthen the state's programs for these children. This state has a remarkable education system; we have a really strong base to build from.

I want to talk about Children in Need and the report of the Committee on Economic Development (CED). I'll summarize the major points of that report, talk about what happens, and how you can shape national policy in this area and at the state level.

What the CED tried to do was identify critical public issues and put together a group of top business people and experts on the subject. The first CED report focused on education in general. We then decided to zero in on the at risk group.

The CED process is significant because it is led by business people. There are research people involved, but the work is really completed from the business point of view. What public education needs today, and what at risk young people need today, is broader public support for their problems and the necessary resources to work with those problems. I've spent part of my career trying to broaden public support and in particular to bring in what I call the military and industrial complex. The powerful leaders in the country must recognize that they are central to our survival as a nation and must be willing to deal, in a real and meaningful way, with the problems of the poorest children in our society.

I don't see a conflict with my leadership of a major research university and my desire to focus carefully on the problems of poor children. I think they are directly related. UW-Madison will not survive as a university of the first rank in the long term unless we deal with problems of at risk children. The reasons for my support are my interest in the problems of poor children and my own self-interest as a leader of higher education. It is not simply a question of whether at risk youngsters are ever going to have access to higher education. It is whether higher education is ever going to have the human resources it needs to fulfill its role if we don't deal now with the problems of our poorest children. There is a direct link. Taking my role seriously involves joining with the business community and encouraging their support for issues of at risk children.

When you meet with business leaders, get them to talk about things in their own terms. Therefore, this new vocabulary—the tie between doing something about poor children and economic competitiveness—the concept of investing early. You put money in on the front end to make sure you do everything you can to give these children a good, strong start. It is a different way to conceptualize an issue for policy purposes.

What is interesting about the CED report is not the content, but the way the business community brought their own expertise to a major public policy problem. This report sounds like a business report, not an education report. It says things in a way we have been unable to say, or at least, have said differently. While educators have been able to get corporate leaders to sign on the goody goody kind of statements about these problems, once they frame it in their own context they have a stake in it. This will make all the difference in the world, particularly as we move into a new administration in Washington and begin to think about the federal role.

This report is important because it combines what we know about health and welfare and our new strategies in the health and welfare area of educational strategy. The most important recommendation is prevention through early intervention. For the first time in a major educational reform report, prenatal care, teenage pregnancy prevention, and early child care, are brought together with more traditional educational reform recommendations. When the report says "early intervention," it is not talking about kindergarten and the first three grades. It is talking about a much earlier period. The discussions we had were about low birth weight babies and the relationship between prenatal care, the low birth weight problem, and the eventual high cost as we move through the education system.

That linkage became terribly important. It is also the place where we have the best numbers and that is what you look for—high payoff.

The difficulty in dealing with the at risk issue and trying to provide a broader base of support is convincing people that putting any more money into education will make a difference. In the whole prenatal, low birth weight, high risk health area, we have some much harder numbers than we have ever had in the education area. If you link those numbers with what we have learned about Headstart you begin to see a coherent strategy emerge. It gives you an idea of where you ought to intervene. Programs to encourage pregnant teenagers and those who choose to stay in school, prenatal and postnatal care for pregnant teens and other high risk mothers, family health care and development of screening for children, parenting education for both mothers and fathers, quality child care arrangements for teenagers in school and for working parents, and then quality preschool programs for all disadvantaged three and four year olds. That whole series of recommendations, if you have gotten a bunch of educators together when we did this report, would not automatically have come up. It was our ability to link the health and welfare issues with the educational issues that was critical. Much of that comes out of the Children's Defense Fund approach. What Marion has done for us in Washington is beginning to have an impact in general on educational policy because that crew has always looked at health and welfare issues at the national level. What we have been able to do for the first time is to get some of our major national education leaders such as Mary Futrell from NEA and Al Shanker from the AFT, to sit on this panel and see the link and start to talk about the link between health and welfare issues and what we eventually want to do in education.

The first set of recommendations related to early investment through prevention and early intervention. The second set of recommendations came out of our discussions and our early findings on Headstart. They said that all the work done at early levels didn't catch on unless you followed it up in the early grades. The language of the CED report talks about school-based management and gives teachers and principals more flexibility to work with young people.

The report also spoke of teachers who have made a commitment to youngsters that need additional help; it spoke of smaller schools and smaller classes; it spoke of up-to-date educational technology, support systems within the schools, and increased emphasis on extracurricular activities.

This report places considerable emphasis on attracting outstanding professionals who were paid well and given autonomy. We can't attract first rate people to deal with at risk children without giving them the autonomy to make decisions and put together strategies at the school level.

We didn't want anyone to think we were giving up on at risk youngsters who were older so we made a series of recommendations about retention and reentry. What strikes you about at risk kids is how weak they are in basic skills. That means if you bring back young people who have dropped out, you have to emphasize the basics all over again.

We didn't want to give up on teenagers, on dropouts. We felt that they ought to be part of our overall definition and the overall strategy for at risk young people. So that gives you some sense of what we are up to.

This is the first of the reports from corporate America. CED has also identified a way for major federal involvement in domestic programs. This is the first time we convinced corporate people that there really had to be a federal role if you were talking about at risk young people.

There is no way the states alone are able to deal with the poorest children. The resources differ so greatly from state to state that the federal role is essential. This resource difference also means we need to continue Chapter One and targeted programs for adults.

Those of us who participate at different levels in terms of reports and policy making pay attention to research in the field. We are constantly looking for ways to answer the question, "If you have a little amount of public money available, what is the most effective way to use it?" That is what this conference is about. "If Wisconsin has a limited amount of public money, how should it be used to solve our problems with at risk youth?" We have pressures on us from different constituencies in this state and in our community.

Secretary of Education Bennett, is not happy with the effect of the reform report. I would urge him to hang in there for a while. It is going to take some time to put these things in place. He is looking for quick answers which are not there, particularly at the level of funding we produce.

We have got to show results in the long run. The business community, interestingly enough, is convinced that we have not done the level of research and development we need to do. They have never seen organizations that have so few trained managers and get such inadequate feedback about what we're doing and what effect it is having.

When we discussed school-based management, the business people were interested in making certain that we built in data collection, something the leaders of the school could use to measure the impact of their work. They have a particular interest in that. I thought that the mechanics of how we put these things together and why we put them together would be more interesting since many people have talked at length about the substance of these recommendations.

The basic recommendations are early intervention combined with health and social service efforts, changing the organization of schools, and giving more autonomy and flexibility to school people at the school level. Third, to do some things about retention and reentry. We don't think all of these are going to be followed immediately, but there has been movement across this country and in Wisconsin, with its great reputation for innovation and willingness to try new things in the area of social policy. One of the things that attracted me to Wisconsin was the willingness to talk about new ways to approach solving old problems.

One of the things Wisconsin does not have is a visible business community. The economic interests are more visible in other states, but this state seems to come out on different issues. I come from a state where we talked David Rockefeller and the chairman of American Express into going to the state legislature and testifying on a new bill for low birth weight babies. They got the whole New York City partnership to focus on a piece of legislation to cover more mothers for prenatal care. We pulled leaders out of the business community because their presence gave visibility to the issue.

We got the bill passed because it makes a difference when the governor gets a call from the business community about a particular social issue. The business community in Wisconsin must begin to see these issues as ties to the economic future of the state.

Question: Do you see any conflict between the excellence movement and the need for educational reform for at risk?

No I don't. We shouldn"t assume that kids who are poor cannot meet high standards. If we learned anything about disadvantaged young people and about their schools it is that we have to set the clearest and highest standards and at the same time **build a solid support system so people can reach them.** Not only should we talk about excellence but also make sure that everyone has a shot at it. I come from a world in which some of the most gifted students were minorities and low income kids. After understanding exactly who these children are, I can say that what we are after is excellence in which everybody gets to participate.

I am not shy in making sure we have very high standards. The worst thing we can do is lower standards. Some people feel that just because we build in support systems, it means that we are

lowering our standards. I don't believe that. In fact, my sense is that for minority young people that come to UW-Madison, their problems are not academic, they are financial. They are much more fragile because they come from poor families. They need financial and counseling supports. That has nothing to do with lowering the academic standards. It has to do with putting services together that make certain the institution is responsive.

The best schools with high numbers of minorities and low-income students also have clear, defined, rigorous standards and the right kinds of support systems built in. I am talking about excellence and opportunity in the same breath.

When I went to school they taught you how to solve problems with new money. Today, we need to talk about a combination of reallocation of base money and restructuring how we do things. Our institutions are underfunded, so I don't think we should pretend to the people of the state that we can provide adequate services without some new money being added to the system. But we have got to tie the changes to the expectations of those money sources. You just can't ask generally for large pots of money. We have to make sure the dollars are tied to proven strategies that make sense to people. One thing we are trying to promote in the CED report is that early investment makes a difference in the long run.

Another critical component is broader coalitions. I spoke recently about the military industrial complex. My dream was to have the Secretary of Education testify on his budget. Sitting nearby would be the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense talking about how central the quality of education is to our survival as a country. It is that kind of attitude that the business community needs to adapt as a central interest whether it is small business, and that is very much the Wisconsin base, or larger businesses. Providing opportunities so that there are less people needing public support is critical to Wisconsin's competitiveness. Our job is to design a strategy which tells the public very specifically what we need while giving them the sense that this is a long term investment. This state starts with a pretty good base.

Question: What kind of evaluation would you like to see when programming for at risk youth?

Educators get their backs up when people use the word "evaluation," because all we need are a bunch of outside people from the university coming in to evaluate. I'm talking about the kind of evaluation that gives you the feedback you need to fine-tune your program.

I use survey research in my business. My interest is strong because I am a policy researcher, but I think that we need to build in evaluations at the school level that aren't reported on the front page of every newspaper. That's important because, after all, we don't know all the answers, but we do know that we have to keep working with it until we get it right. That means you need a flexibility we now don't' have in the system. I think a school-based management approach is fine but it has to have some R&D built in at the local level and we don't have enough of that. If you look at the R&D done in education compared with American businesses and corporations, there is no comparison. We need to be spending a much higher percentage of budgets on research development and evaluation as a way of refining and improving education.

My attitude is that we are all in this together. I don't think higher education has all the answers or that elementary and secondary has all the answers, but I think we can bring together what we know and develop different strategies. UW-Madison is about to make an informal commitment to the Madison schools. I am really interested in bringing the resources of the University to the schools to see if by working with principals, teachers, parents, and the kids we can figure out what works. Setting that cooperative tone is critical.

Questions and Answers - An Audience Discussion

Participants: Gary Wehlage, Susan Phillips, Cynthia Brown, and Bill Erpenbach

Susan Phillips opened with a plea to educators to actively seek the involvement of Wisconsin business leaders. The business community plays a minimal role in state education issues. It is up to educators to demonstrate the important tie between business development and education. Invite business people to the schools, send them executive summaries of important reports, and involve them in activities in which they can "role up their sleeves."

A member of the audience asked about incentives for greater school/business collaboration. Phillips suggested that the most important incentive is recognizing that we cannot afford to have one-third of our population unemployable. Getting this information to CEO's is imperative.

When asked about vocational components in the fourteen programs he had studied, Gary Wehlage said that experiential education was more important than vocational training. Such an educational process gives students outside-of-school experiences they may not encounter as a result of their socioeconomic backgrounds. It serves as a primary tool for eliciting student engagement, for bringing at risk youth into academic and vocational learning.

Another questioner raised the issue of federal support for parent education. Cynthia Brown indicated that the Council of Chief State School Officers has begun to look into this area. At present the only potential funding is through the Educational Cooperation and Improvement Act, the Perkins Education Act, and to a limited extent, the Women's Education and Equity Act.

Brown, Phillips, and Erpenbach all responded to a question about linking the local and state criminal justice systems to the schools. Brown acknowledged that little attention has been paid to this question, although the Chief State School Officers looked into it this year. Erpenbach said there is a high correlation between dropout rates and chemical abuse and criminal activity. A more comprehensive approach is needed. Phillips described the Milwaukee Teen Initiative which focuses on developing support mechanisms that link the student, his/her home, the school, and a mentor from the business community.

A final questioner was concerned about finding effective models of parent involvement. Phillips described the training program at the Brookline Elementary School in Pittsburgh. A teacher, especially skilled in eliciting parent involvement, was asked to train teachers throughout the Pittsburgh district. Phillips acknowledged that developing links between home and school is crucial since academic achievement is strongly correlated with levels of parent involvement.

"The Council of Chief State School Officers' Model Statute for Serving Children At Risk"

Cynthia G. Brown, Resource Center on Educational Equity
Council of Chief State School Officers

Cynthia Brown gave two reasons for concerning ourselves with the needs of at risk youth. The first is ethical. Ethics, however, are rarely enough to lead to the broad policy initiatives required to address this problem. The second is economic. Given the imperatives of the contemporary marketplace, all American students must be equipped to participate in an increasingly sophisticated economy.

With this in mind, the CCSSO framed a model state statute to assist policymakers in the development of legislation aimed at achieving this end. The model is based on three premises. First, all children can learn. Second, not only can they learn, but we know how to teach them. Third, what we teach ought to

be relatively the same and relatively challenging for all student populations. We should avoid, however, different curricula and pedagogy for different students.

Brown argued that the best way to accomplish this goal is to develop legislation focusing on entitlement, not funding. She pointed to the congressional act that required handicapped children to be placed in the mainstream as the most effective model. This legislation guarantees education and related services and has been successful in meeting the educational needs of nearly all handicapped students. In contrast, legislation like Chapter I, which focuses only on funding, is now reaching only 40 percent of the children it was designed to aid.

The CCSSO statute has five primary components. First, it guarantees economically disadvantaged children 3 and 4 years of age the right to attend a preschool program. Second, it guarantees public school students the right to attend a successful school (one in which 75 percent of the student population perform at or above a standard chosen by school authorities), or a school en route to success (one that improves performance by 5 percent each year). A student who is not in a successful school has the right to transfer to another public school that meets the appropriate standard even if this entails inter-district transfers. Third, the statute guarantees that in successful schools an individual teaching and learning plan (ITLP) will be drawn up for at risk students. Fourth, students who have dropped out of high school have the right to re-enroll if they decide to pursue this route. Fifth, students and parents who are dissatisfied with a district's inability or unwillingness to fulfill these rights can seek litigation in the courts.

The strength of this statute is that it diminishes the need for regulation by focusing on outcomes rather than process.

Questions/Answers

When challenged about the effectiveness of ITLPs, Brown admitted that the CCSSO had not researched this element of their statute. She did suggest, however, that individualized learning plans appear to be appropriate for at risk students when they compose a minority of a total student population. If the majority of a school's students were at risk, the CCSSO felt that its staff should concentrate on reforming the school as a whole.

Another conference participant asked about the danger of segregating at risk students in alternative programs. Brown said that although this is a danger, alternatives may be the most appropriate educational response for students who are returning to school or already have "one foot out the door."

When asked about conflicting reports on the educational impact of class size, Brown said that reducing class size by four or five students does not make much difference. When dealing with at risk youth, however, more dramatic reductions—down to classes of twelve students, for example—are often necessary and effective.

We are all concerned about low income and other disadvantaged youngsters. Wisconsin was one of the first states to act on their concerns and implement educational legislation targeted for at risk students. In addition, your state School Age Parents and Education for Employment programs are also ground-breakers. Many of us have been slow to focus on the education system's responsibilities within welfare reform legislation. We are looking to your Learnfare experience in Wisconsin for important lessons and insights.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction applied for and won two competitive grants from our organization to pursue the improvement of education for at risk children and youth. This conference, is the culmination of one of the grant efforts shared with the National Governors Association. We at the Council are impressed with the commitment you have to meeting the challenges of providing quality education and related services to at risk children and youth. We commend your serious

review of the progressive Wisconsin legislation and programs which address these issues to see if they are sufficient and are appropriately implemented. We are glad that you are using the Council's policy statement, "Assuring School Success for Students At Risk" and our "Model State Statute" as tools in your review and planning.

The Council policy study recommendations for at risk kids began when David Hornbeck, Superintendent of Maryland, assumed the Council's presidency. Under Hornbeck's leadership, the Council Board of Directors decided to make "state efforts to improve education for at risk kids" a two year theme and a permanent programmatic priority.

Why are the Chief State School Officers of the fifty states placing an emphasis on children at risk of school failure? Why now? One reason is the human or ethical one. Society, including the schools, failed America's children in many ways. These children will spend a lifetime of grinding and debilitating poverty. Bert Grover speaks the truth when he says that sheer decency should be adequate motivation for us to do what is necessary to reach these youngsters. But the evidence is abundant that decency and compassion are not sufficient to provoke the imagination, will, and resources necessary to do the tough job of providing initiatives that result in young people who are independent, productive workers, and effective students.

There is a reason for concern beyond this human factor; "the economic imperatives" of life today. Demographic and economic circumstances in this country make it clear that we must equip America's citizens to "work smarter." The decline in the number of youth is such that as a nation we no longer have the "luxury "of economically disposable human beings. We need <u>all</u> children. We need black and brown youngsters who fail in disproportionate numbers, and we need those youngsters who come to us speaking a first language other than English. We welcome their talent with the hope to succeed with all young people.

But we haven't done this. Here are some startling figures that reflect the situation of people who never successfully connected with education. These are from the recently published William T. Grant Foundation Commission on <u>Work, Family and Citizenship</u> and its report on the <u>Forgotten Half of Noncollege Youth in America</u>. According to the report the average income in America doubled between 1947 and 1973 in constant dollars, but between 1973 and 1987 there was a decline of $262 in constant dollars. Worse yet, in terms of family stability in 1985, only 44 percent of all American males between the ages of 20 and 24 earned above $8,000, which was the poverty line. That is less than half of what is needed to support a family of three above the poverty level. For black males between 20 and 24 you discover that in 1985 only 28 percent of them earned above the poverty line. For adult high school dropouts the decline in income in constant dollars between 1973 and 1986 was 42 percent. Such low income has extraordinary consequences for human beings, decisions about families, and our economic life together. That is why dropping out is so much more serious today then it was in the past.

We have let poverty breed poverty. If we are to remain an economically viable nation, this can't continue. A well-educated and trained entry level workforce is a necessity. Council members understand this economic imperative and realize that schools are a central force in accurately preparing the workforce of the future. Recognizing this, we embarked on a number of specific activities which culminated on Monday, November 16, 1987, in the unanimous endorsement of a new policy statement entitled "Assuring School Success with At Risk Youth." **The objective is high school graduation for virtually all students by the year 2000.** The statement emphasizes three basic premises. Everything in the policy statement and model statute flows from these three premises.

Premise one is that all kids can learn. All kids have the capacity to perform. This is an assertion that many make, but frequently our actions suggest that we do not believe it. It is absolutely fundamental to everything the Council advocates.

Premise two is that not only can all kids learn, but we as teachers should be able to reach all types of children. That is not easy nor is it going on in every school system across the United States. But neither is it mysterious. In many places in this country there are successful classrooms effectively reaching all types of children; children who are poor; children who don't speak English as a first language; children who come from every conceivable experience.

Premise three is, what we teach kids ought to be the same and challenging. In other words, we should not be providing challenging curriculum to middle class and rich kids and a watered down curriculum to poor kids. We ought to be reaching out to all students in a challenging way. What we teach our kids should be the same, but how, where, and when we teach and who teaches them ought to vary. Variability ought to depend upon what works. That is to say that if the first attempt doesn't work, then we ought to alter our method.

The Council concluded that there needed to be a new order of policy commitment if we were truly going to change schooling for at risk students. We did not just want to add more money to categorical programs that dealt with only part of the problem or reached only a proportion of the kids needing the program. David Hornbeck's remark, "by golly we are going to serve every single kid," is different from saying "by golly we are going to serve every kid if only the legislature will do this or if only somebody else will do that". He illustrates the difference between a total entitlement commitment and categorical programs by comparing two federal statutes: the Education of the Handicapped Act PL94-142 and Chapter One. In the Handicapped Act, Congress said to every school system, school and every school system superintendent, "You must serve every disabled youngster." This statute was not an appropriation, despite the promise contained in it (a 40 percent federal support of the excess costs). The real drama of the statute was that this nation made a commitment to disabled kids because it was the right thing to do. Today, thirteen years later, 100 percent of the eligible children under PL 94-142 are served. Not all are served the way we want them to be, not all served appropriately, but all are served in one form or another.

In contrast, is the primary initiative on behalf of at risk kids, which was passed ten years earlier than PL94-142 in the form of Title One of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We now call it Chapter One. It was an appropriations statute and today, 23 years after the passage of Chapter One, only 40 percent of the eligible children are served. The difference between these programs is no accident. One was a policy commitment to serve all disabled youngsters and the other was an appropriation commitment which we fight on yearly in the halls of Congress. Unless, or until, we make the commitment reflected in PL94-142, particularly at the state level, we will have the structures that call upon people, resources, imagination, the will, the state legislatures, the city council, the school boards, and the citizenry of this nation, to set high expectations that will result in serving those youngsters who are most difficult to reach. That represents the core, the one essential ingredient of the Council policy statement and model statute; the guarantee of education and related services. Everything else in this statement and statute can vary and change. But the one essential piece that is not fudgable is the **policy commitment**, which calls for guarantees or assurances of a legal nature.

If we believe we need a new order of policy commitment, then the issue becomes, "What are you going to guarantee?" That leads to a list of 11 guarantees that constitute the essential framework to support the premises that all kids can learn and that we know how to do it. In calling for these guarantees and entitlements the chiefs expressed their willingness and enthusiasm for accepting the school's share of the responsibility for reaching all of the nation's children. They recognized that any successful strategies will include the school as the centerpiece.

But it is clear that the school cannot do the job alone, thus the statement calls upon the state, not just the state Department of Education, to stand behind the guarantees.

Unlike the policy statement, the Model Statute was not formally voted upon by Council members. Instead, recognizing that rhetoric alone does not always fully explain the quality, breadth and depth of such policy statements, we published the Model Statute as an illustration of one way to implement the Council Policy Statement. We wanted to show that our recommendations could be translated into action legislation. But by no means do we think our statute is the only or the best way to do it. It is entitled Elements of a Model State Statute to Provide Educational Entitlements for At Risk Students. It is the product of a six month effort by a Council workgroup composed of two chiefs, a deputy state superintendent, other state employees, educational researchers, child advocates, and education lawyers. We had the Council draft documents reflecting the three premises discussed, and the eleven guarantees.

The Statute is divided into four sections relating to the age of at risk children and youth. It also defines "at riskness" differently by age. We tried hard to minimize labeling that could lead to harmful tracing or segregation, but we believe there must be some identification criteria to target our guarantees. At the preschool level the statute defines at risk children as those from families living in poverty or children unable to speak or comprehend the English language. For kids in kindergarten through third grade we add to that eligibility the children who are behind in mastering basic skills. From fourth grade through 12th grade, the definition of at riskness becomes exclusively objective with measurable outcomes. Poverty and language are set aside. The Statute calls for the establishment of potential criteria such as school performance or attendance. For example, if a kid missed 50 days of school last year, I think we all agree he is at risk for school failure. You can have a student who is rich and misses 50 days of school who meets the definition or another student whose parents make $2,000 per year, who is in school everyday, and is making straight A's who doesn't meet the definition. The definition shifts to whether or not a kid, in observable ways, is en route to dropping out of school.

The Council Statute guarantees a quality preschool program to those youngsters who are poor and to those whose first language is not English. It also sets quality standards which state education agencies should require of local school systems, or private and public agencies which might contract with the public schools to operate a child development program.

Second, for children and youth at risk for school failure between kindergarten and the 12th grade, the Statute guarantees these special measures. It requires that schools follow policies and practices that generally result in success with students. These practices aren't very new or bold, but if kids don't have them then they are really behind the eight ball and, frankly, many at risk kids attend schools where several of these effective practices are not present. Such promising practices would likely include certified staff, planned instructional strategies, adequate supplies, up to date textbooks and other materials, affirmative efforts to involve parents at home and at school, orderly facilities and a system of school based administration. This means no long term substitutes for kids in certain schools, no shortage of textbooks and teachers in certain subjects like math and physics, no old textbooks or teachers working out of their field, nor destructive school environments. The statute also guarantees students at risk the right to be in a successful school. Some critics charge that it is outrageous to shift the burden of responsibility to the school, away from the kid. The assumption behind such an assertion is that if we do that, the kid that fails somehow escapes the burden of failure. Not so. Statistics relating school performance and completion to later income show conclusively that under educated people suffer. The Council Statute defines a successful school as one in which 75 percent of its students are performing at or above a standard to assure satisfactory progress toward graduation. Such standards may include test performance, dropout rates, attendance status, and extracurricular participation. There are other standards that school authorities determines will indicate successful momentum towards high school graduation.

The argument says that under this statute there are a lot of high schools in Milwaukee that would be empty tomorrow because few of them could meet these particular standards of success. We understood that, so there is a second criteria of success we put in the statute. Recognizing that many schools with large concentrations of at risk students would not initially meet the 75 percent standard, the Statute provides that schools would be deemed in compliance if the proportion of their students meeting the standards increases by at least 5 percent per year.

Schools should be either successful or demonstrably in route to being successful. No student should bear the burden of a school that is neither. Obviously, the policy question lying behind this notion is that we ought to expect the school's movement to be in the right direction. If the school is not moving, it is the responsibility of the LEA and the SEA to move it along.

What happens to the child that is not in a successful school. The answer the Council Statute suggests is that the student has the right to leave; he or she doesn't have to stay. Specifically, any at risk student in a school meeting neither the 75 percent or the 5 percent standard, has a right to transfer to a public school that does meet these standards. The school system may determine which public school. If the school the student transfers to is outside the home district, the home district will have both the tuition and transportation responsibilities. Obviously we are introducing the controversial notion of interdistrict transfer, though that is not a new issue to Wisconsin.

This provision does not say a child can get up one morning and say, "Gosh, I don't like my school. I'm going to leave." Our proposal has a choice element to it, but it is not consistent with everybody's definition of choice. It is a choice based on school performance as a precondition. If the student is not in a successful school, he or she doesn't get to go to any school that he/she or the parents want. The kid just doesn't wander around the streets and say, "That one looks nice." Under the terms of our statute the student goes to the school the local school system chooses. They can say, "You go to that successful school over here, not that one over there."

In addition, we called for phasing in the successful school requirements. Schools should have time to get their acts together before being judged by these standards. The Statute also does not, by any means, forget the unsuccessful school. Instead, if the school persists in being unsuccessful the statute requires action by the local system. If a system has too many unsuccessful schools, the statute then calls for substantive state intervention.

The third piece of the kindergarten through 12th grade provision addresses the so called IEP, or what we call the ITEP, the individualized teaching and learning plan. It applies to successful schools at the 75 percent level. Remember though, the 25 percent not succeeding may be just as bad off as those kids coming out of school where most of the student body is not succeeding. We believe that until the school is successful, the focus should be on the school and school plans, not the individual students.

Moreover, boilerplate individual plans would likely become repetitive and stagnant. However, in successful schools it is important to have a vehicle through which continual attention is riveted on youngsters with whom the school has not yet succeeded. What the Statute proposes in the ITLP section is that if you get to the point that a school is successful, then the attention can shift to the individual student and the guarantees accrued to that individual child. We tried to think of another vehicle to reach these at risk students because so many people do not like IEPs, but we failed. We do have a few suggestions, however.

One final point is significant for youngsters in the K-12 group. As I noted earlier, between kindergarten and 3rd grade at risk is defined in terms of poverty, language and school achievement. Between the 4th and 12th grades the suggested criteria are totally school based. With respect to the first two measures, the right to promising practices and the right to a successful school, the only purposes of the at risk definition is to define which young people have the right to enforce these guarantees. *It is not to label children.* Nor is the definition's purpose to encourage mass classroom

pullouts. Indeed it can be argued persuasively that a program that pulls children out of a regular classroom is not a promising practice. The Chiefs recognized that the ITLP provision, the third measure, can be used as a labeling device. However, to use it that way and track and segregate youngsters accordingly, is to misuse a tool that can be valuable for planning when used properly.

The last part of this statute establishes duty on school systems to reach out to young people who have dropped out and reenroll them in appropriate education programs. As you did with Learnfare, we are coming at things from an educational approach, not a welfare approach. The setting we advocate may be either in the public schools or in alternative settings. To be more explicit, we need to quit pushing students out. In too many instances, this is still going on. For example, calling in a 16-year-old who has a behavior problem and is reading at a 5th grade level, and saying, "Don't you realize you are 16 years old and can get this fabulous job at McDonald's? Why don't you go down there and quit coming here and playing everyday." Sooner or later that kid wanders off, not only from school, but from McDonald's as well. What this section contemplates instead, is a reaching out to dropouts. Now we do not advocate taking the 16-year-old who is reading at the 5th grade level and putting him or her back in elementary school, saying, " Go to it kid." Instead, we need to create intelligent responses for that young man or woman in terms of the ways we know these youngsters can be taught.

Finally, the statute sets forth easily administered enforcement procedures. It places the responsibility on school systems to inform parents of their rights arising under this statute. It provides the students, parents, or other representatives of the student, the right as a last resort to go to court for compliance. The statute is comprehensive. When enacted it will result in major school restructuring. We also believe the statute sets the stage for significant deregulation of education. Regulation is necessary when measuring input. When measuring output, that is asking all students to be successful when measured against appropriate standards, the need for regulation wanes significantly. Focusing on outcome can unleash the creativity of millions of parents, teachers, and others associated with the local school. The jargon word "empowerment" becomes more than just rhetoric.

The issue is whether or not we end up as a nation, as a state, making the prior delivery of a certain level of resources a precondition to the policy commitment guarantee. That is a difficult question. Ideally, these should happen simultaneously. The Council concluded that if we are going to succeed in reaching all at risk kids and providing the resources, we need to endorse a risky proposition of seeking to make this set of policy commitments even before the commitment is made for the additional resources needed to accomplish our objectives. State educational leaders must take the step of urging this measure of risk and assume that if we are prepared to be held accountable that along the way will come the resources. The Council is talking about state resources and state law, though we acknowledge key local and federal roles.

The reason we propose these recommendations is because we are the Council of Chief State School Officers. If we run around saying we are going to pin all this on the local and federal level, then we would be saying it is somebody else's responsibility. What we have tried to say is that we and other state officials have a fundamental responsibility to be up front and provide the leadership for this type of risk taking. It can't be done by Chief State School Officers and the state education agency alone. It was the Council members' hope that we could put this vision in front of people in several states and see what happened.

We spent last year discussing the issues surrounding at risk children and youth and developing our recommendations. This year we are focusing on implementing our recommendations. Our most exciting project is the grant program supported by the U.S. Department of Labor which has awarded eleven states, including Wisconsin, up to $40,000 to promote state level guarantees of education and related services to youngsters. Twenty-nine states submitted applications for these grants. I am grateful to be part of this important endeavor.

"What Should Wisconsin's Dream Be?"

Susan Phillips, Education Coordinator
Greater Milwaukee Committee

In presenting the conference work groups with their task, Susan Phillips reminded participants that educational reformers often overestimate the power of policy. She argued that standards, however, may provide a route toward substantial changes. Meeting those standards could lead to a reevaluation of the effectiveness of our current educational structures. If educators see that widely accepted practices are not working, they, like business people, may then consider developing new learning models.

The charge to you is to use your experience in the classroom and your experience with at risk legislation. We want to know what your opinions and your recommendations are for possible policy revisions or deletions.

Al Shanker, AFT president referred to a recent report which concluded that educational reform has historically had little effect on teaching and learning in the classroom. You can do a lot of talking and put a lot on paper, but sometimes some of those things that hit us cold in the paper are hard reality. He suggests that reformers constantly overestimate the power of policy. He concludes by suggesting that unless our policies make broad allowances for school practioners to decide what works for them in their particular circumstances, with particular students, we will keep filling our classes with more and more heavyweight ideas whose only fault is that they don't work. Since we are at the writing and creating stage this is something we all have to keep in mind.

My role at the Greater Milwaukee Committee is to serve as the link between the schools and the business community. I make them aware of what is happening in education, what kinds of students our educational systems are dealing with, and what their responsibilities are as business people in our community.

I am also a thorn in the sides of educators because I believe things have to change; that we can't keep putting more dollars and more resources and more staff into doing the same kinds of things. I spend a lot of time going in and out of classrooms, listening and watching teachers and kids, and talking to principals. Educators do need to open up and not allow themselves to be walled away from the community.

In representing companies and corporations, I have become very aware of how dependent they are upon education. The demographics are going to make them even more dependent. There can no longer be a certain segment of the population that they don't need. We now know we will be facing labor shortages and at the same time one third of the population corporations need has been deemed at risk, unemployable, and illiterate. They need to remain competitive and productive. There is no question that our companies require well-trained and well-educated employees; employees who can read, write, compute, and communicate in standard English as well as another language. From the management trainees that we have in our businesses to the custodians who take care of our physical plants, we can't afford the accidents illiteracy causes.

In addition, our state economy can't afford to support growing number of dependent unemployables. My other concern is very personal. I have been involved with education since 1968. I began as an employment director at a very large financial institution in Baltimore and worked with Baltimore city and county schools. It was very frustrating.

I am not a very patient person. I have not seen significant changes and success in reaching the hard to reach and the hard to teach in those twenty years. There are some real success stories, but not many. These successes haven't spread very far. In many ways the problem has gotten worse.

I talked about your students being products and some of you flinched. It is hard for an educator to refer to students as products. But if young people who leave our schools with or without degrees, are not the products of our schools, whose products are they? Sure, they are the products of their families and communities and society, but there is really no question that your "production line" is their education. I believe that is an analogy we can make. You are probably just as tired as I am of hearing what is going on, but let me quickly share an overriding perception I have.

It really seems as if we are doing more of the same. With more dollars and more staff we are getting the same results. This is an over simplification, but in business, when our raw materials change (and there is no question that some of your raw materials have changed), or our product does not sell, we retool. That means rethinking the product we are putting out and restructuring our line. It means putting in place the manpower, technology, and the financing to produce the desired results. The bottom line in much of what we have had to do is restructure. In most cases, this means putting in a lot more money to get different results. If the product does come off our production line and doesn't sell, we change. I understand our raw materials have changed and the product isn't selling, but the fact is that we have remained much the same not only in the twenty years I have been involved, but in some cases one hundred years. We can't keep doing more of the same. Our students need us to pool our collective wisdom and vision for the future and break the molds that we have been locked.

Some exciting things are happening and many of you are involved. Most of all, schools are starting to reach out. Many of our schools are reaching out to the community. But they realize there is only so much they can do in 180 days, six hours a day. At the same time, we have a community that is beginning to reach in. Businesses and community agencies are going to be the key to whether we can achieve the desired results. The dialogue and the rhetoric must culminate in action plans with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each of the participants. We must end up with action and not rhetoric. I think that is one thing we all have to guard against. When you bring someone into a partnership you have to build trust. We must also divide up the roles and make sure everybody does their share while working together. I really think the main responsibility falls upon school personnel to become the catalysts to rally these forces around our at risk kids. It is one more thing to heap upon educators, but I think you are probably the best ones to make the community aware.

How do we challenge our students and build high expectations? How do we engage all of our students in learning, whether they learn cognitively or developmentally? How do we help them understand the relevancy of education and their futures? The consistency we give our kids with adults is crucial. It's important that over time they develop relationships with staff. Maybe we do need to rethink the way we set up our curriculum. In many cases our at risk students have a class and a teacher for three months and then never see that person again.

There are other questions about our present state statute that need to be discussed. First, should the present definition for at risk be broader than the present Wisconsin definition? Who is really eligible? Should there be changes in the contracting provision? Should it be more flexible? Should the performance standards be increased to include all of the standards? Should percentages be changed from 70 percent to 80 percent regarding attendance and retention, promotion, credits for graduation, and month by month improvement. Should a parental appeal process exist for parents who want their children transferred to alternate schools? Should students be forced to wait to participate in alternative programs by nonpublic school agencies such as MATC in Milwaukee.

Second, what do we do with the suggestions made by the Council of Chief State School Officers? Should the existing statute be expanded to include areas in which we agree, or are we courting danger by messing with the existing statute? Are we better off to create a second statute to expand the state's at risk program?

The Chief's definition refers to children three and four, and in that definition it suggests that we should be using poverty as an at risk guide because you are not going to be testing three- and four-

year olds (and probably English language deficiency). If we use English language deficiency and you create a program for three- and four-year-olds, should we be running a bilingual program? Another question is parental involvement. The point is made in the working paper that neither the Wisconsin State Statute nor the Chief State School Officers' Statute goes far enough or in talking about parental involvement. Should stronger language encouraging interagency collaboration and integration of services for children at risk be included?

The reenrollment entitlement section needs attention. What do you want to put into policy regarding how we should allow students to reenroll? Should we be pulling back the ones that have left our school systems? Consider the individual teaching and learning plan. My gut reaction is, "Oh no, not more IEP's."

In your work groups, consider the following questions:

Should the present definition for at risk be changed? (i.e., who is really eligible?)

Should there be changes in the contracting provision?

Should the performance standards be increased to include all of the standards?

Should percentages be changed from 70 percent to 80 percent regarding attendance and retention, promotion, credits for graduation, and month by month improvement?

Should a parental appeal process exist for parents who want their children transferred to alternate schools?

Should students be forced to wait to participate in alternative programs by nonpublic school agencies such as MATC in Milwaukee?

Consider the suggestions made by the Council of Chief State School Officers regarding the definition. Their definition suggests we should be using poverty and English language deficiency as criteria by which we can test three- and four- year olds.

Another question involves parent involvement. Should we include stronger language encouraging interagency collaboration and integration of services for children at risk? Examine the re-enrollment entitlement section and determine what you want to put into policy. Two other issues are the individual teaching and learning plan and the environment for a successful education.

The directives for your task at hand follow. You will have someone in your group from DPI who will act as a recorder and facilitator. You will report back to this group tomorrow after you finish the tasks of policy and implementation recommendations. You will report briefly before a panel, allowing them to react to your plans. Prioritize items you feel are most important in dealing with at risk students from the priorities of all the gropus we will select the top three. You will use those three priorities for discussion as you work through the sheet. We want the group's recommendations for policy and implementation strategies.

Presentation of Work Group Recommendations

Work groups were asked to complete a two-part task. The first was to prioritize a list of twelve recommendations regarding policy for children at risk in Wisconsin. This list included the following categories:

- *early identification and intervention*

- *whole child approach, funding, business/human services/school linkages*
- *parenting*
- *alternative programs*
- *school structure*
- *school curriculum/instructional approach*
- *parental involvement in schools*
- *school staff preparation*
- *literacy/graduation, and*
- *systematic pupil accounting procedures and pupil records*

The second task involved identifying policy implications of the three recommendations viewed as most important by the group as a whole.

Of the seven groups participating in this process, six included early identification and intervention among the top three recommendations. For five of these groups, this category was given the highest ranking. Five of the seven groups identified a whole child approach. Three chose school structure, and another three, school curriculum/instructional approach. Funding and alternative programs were chosen by two groups each.

The ranking of categories by conference participants:

1. *Early Identification/Intervention*
2. *Whole Child Approach*
3. *School Structure*
4. *School Curriculum/Instructional Approach*
5. *Parental Involvement in Schools*
6. *Funding*
7. *Alternative Programs*
8. *Business/Human Services/School Linkages*
9. *Parenting*
10. *School Staff Preparation*
11. *Literacy/Graduation*
12. *Systematic Pupil Accounting Procedures and Pupil Records*

The following summary includes a fuller description of the seven recommendations seen as most important by conference participants. Though the formation of community linkages, staff training, parenting, and better pupil accounting procedures were not isolated as primary concerns, reference was consistently made to these issues in group discussions of the other recommendations.

Early Identification/Intervention

(1) In order to implement programs that have the potential of preventing children from becoming at risk, the current state definition with its focus on the academic failure of older students should be broadened. One group favored the CCSSO model which establishes different criteria for different age groups. Another group wrote its own definition to include children who have been abused, are suicidal, have significant health problems, are pregnant or parents, have limited English proficiency, have a history of delinquency, have failed to master academic and social skills which are developmentally appropriate, or whose family is experiencing economic/emotional difficulties. A final group felt that the definition of at risk children should be determined by local communities under broad guidelines set by the state.

In regard to the age group covered by this definition, some groups suggested that children from 3 to 21 should be included. Others felt that extending the definition of at risk to children prior to birth might facilitate the creation of programs aimed at improving pre-natal care.

(2) To facilitate early identification, a screening procedure should be developed for all 3-year-olds in the state that would be aimed at identifying children who would benefit from state assistance. For older children, every school building should have a screening/referral team that from kindergarten on would identify at risk children and be prepared to provide supportive help.

(3) There was general agreement that quality child-care (for children from 0 to 3 years of age) should be made available to economically disadvantaged as well as teen parents. The development of publicly-sponsored preschools for three- and four-year-olds was favored by some groups. After-school programs, as well, were seen to be important. Legislation that mandates these programs should include a statement of standards focusing on staff training, the creation of safe environments, and parental involvement. One group noted that these programs should go beyond what is now offered under the auspices of Chapter I and Head Start.

(4) AFDC and WIC benefits could be tied to participation in required parenting and nutrition classes.

(5) There is a need for more accurate tracking of at risk students as they move from school to school or district to district. Information about at risk students ought to be shared across schools more expeditiously. Doing so may require modifying regulations regarding privacy. This tracking should be seen as an interagency responsibility rather than a school responsibility. Within a school, this tracking could be facilitated by assigning a counselor or other adult to each at risk child.

(6) A number of groups indicated the importance of school/health and social services collaboration. One group argued that all pertinent agencies should be required by legislation to work together to develop, implement, and evaluate an at risk plan.

Another group suggested that the creation of an at risk plan be viewed as a community development item. In order to encourage the development of such plans, incentives should be offered to communities for doing so.

(7) Legislation requiring the training of staff who work with at risk youth should be developed. Incentives should be offered to staff who choose to work with this portion of the student population.

(8) At risk programs should be developed at the building level rather than in the central office.

Whole-Child Approach

(1) All appropriate services in a community should be used to eliminate barriers to learning. Legislation should require agencies to identify who will provide which services. Funding mechanisms should require collaboration. To assure that residents of a community are able to use available services, more effort should be directed towards integrating services and presenting them in an accessible manner.

(2) Improving the parental environment could be central to alleviating the problems faced by at risk children. Doing so will entail addressing issues related to minimum wages, housing, and nutrition.

(3) In order to monitor and nurture the social and academic development of at risk students, schools should concentrate on providing opportunities for more adult-child interaction. The use of case managers and mentors, guidance counselors from grades one through twelve, and staff members as advisors was seen as a means for accomplishing this end. It was felt that each student should have a contact person in the school.

(4) Schools should vigorously pursue the education of present and future parents. Parenting classes for the parents of entering kindergarten students, a required parenting class for all high school students, and the provision of support to parents of recovering adolescent drug abusers were all seen as ways the school could have an impact on the quality of a community's family life.

(5) Schools should take more responsibility for the health of their students. Physical exams, prenatal care, and required health education classes were seen as means for meeting this goal.

(6) The whole child approach requires consideration of social as well as academic training. Failure in the workplace can result from inappropriate behaviors as well as a lack of specific academic competence.

School Structure

(1) Give teachers incentives for successful work with at risk students. Tie merit increases to their performance. Do not give raises to those who fail to foster improved student academic achievement.

(2) Make efforts to remove disincentives for starting innovative programs.

(3) Whenever possible, serve students in the regular educational program. Avoid pulling students out of classes as the first choice for at risk children.

(4) Build safety nets into regular school programs to identify and support students at risk of failing. Provide intervention counseling for them. Involve peer counselors, paraprofessional counselors from the community, and significant adults in offering assistance and sustained care to at risk students. The development of school-based student assistance teams could also contribute to such support.

(5) Provide more administrative support for teachers of at risk students.

(6) Use school-based management more widely to create appropriate educational interventions for specific groups of at risk students.

(7) Use case managers to spread out the accountability for the success or failure of at risk children.

(8) Make more efforts to share effective program models for at risk youth within the state. Include information about the basic format of the intervention, implementation guidelines, and appropriate staff development activities.

(9) Pay careful attention to the hiring of staff to work with at risk students.

(10) Encourage teachers to use more effectively information regarding the problems children bring with them to the classroom.

(11) There is a need for adequate support systems. Hire more pupil personnel (counselors and social workers).

School Curriculum

(1) Modernize the curriculum and replace traditional shop courses with technological education to engage more at risk students in the tasks of learning.

(2) Direct more attention toward helping all students acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Pay attention to the affective development of students and cultivating stronger self-concepts.

(3) In developing innovative curricula, avoid watering down course content and develop alternative teaching strategies instead.

Parental Involvement

(1) In order to ensure greater parental involvement, draw up contracts between parents and teachers regarding mutual responsibilities for a child's education. Require parents to personally enroll their child in a special program if this is deemed necessary.

(2) Instruct teachers how to involve parents more extensively in the education of their children. Schools and districts should actively seek greater participation from parents in the development of new programs for at risk students.

(3) Parents should be counseled by school personnel to make more informed choices about their children's education.

Funding

(1) Existing funding should embrace early childhood education. Allocate a portion of the funding given to local districts with successful interventions for at risk children to early childhood programs.

(2) Funding must be sufficient to meet mandated requirements. Some groups thought that categorical funds, such as those provided for handicapped students, would guarantee long-term support for at risk children. Other conference participants, however, were skeptical about the reliability of these resources.

(3) The state should increase its funding level for programming aimed at at risk children from 10 percent to 20 percent.

(4) Offer monetary incentives to districts which are successful in working with at risk children who have returned to their homes from state institutions such as Ethan Allen.

(5) Budgeting for specific at risk programs should be handled at the building level.

(6) Provide incentive funds to those communities which demonstrate collaboration across agencies (i.e., Department of Health and Social Services, local schools, state, and federal agencies).

(7) Don't penalize school districts that do a good job of raising local funds to develop their programs. At present, when cost per pupil ratio goes over a certain limit, state monies are withdrawn.

Alternative Programs

(1) Alternative programs or schools-within-schools must be available to every child who requires them.

(2) Make provisions for intra- and inter-district transfers so that students can enroll in programs which are most appropriate for them.

(3) Establish policies that will lead parents, school personnel, and at risk students to sit down and plan individual courses of study. Districts should provide multiple options. The development of these plans should ensure an education based upon student needs.

(4) Alternative programs must not be add-ons. They must be part of the total system and have standards similar to the mainstream curriculum. Though the speed and nature of instruction may vary, all students should be expected to master the same competencies.

(5) Schools should have programs in place for students returning to school after having dropped out. When mainstreamed, such students should have access to student service centers that offer job training and mental health services.

(6) Make provisions to allow districts outside of Milwaukee to establish contracts with non-sectarian, privately-funded schools to work with at risk children.

Issues Raised During the Question/Answer Period Following Each Group Presentation

Concern was expressed about mechanisms for achieving collaboration. Few groups came up with satisfactory procedures guaranteeing cooperative efforts directed towards at risk children or establish clear accountability.

Questions were also raised about the problematic nature of categorical funding. It was felt that such funds would place the primary leadership for the development of at risk programs with local schools rather than the community.

When objections were raised about language "requiring" parent involvement, the intentions of the recommendation were clarified when a conference participant indicated that what was sought was a commitment on the part of schools to such involvement. This emphasis has been particularly successful in Head Start programs.

In regard to collaboration, it was noted that educators must expand the ownership of the at risk problem. It is the problem of entire communities, not simply the school. "When there's a hole in the boat, there's a hole in the entire boat." It was further noted that significant programmatic changes depend on communities getting together. At the state level, work with at risk children needs to be presented as an economic development program. In this way, attention can be focused on the business community rather than educators and social workers.

One panelist warned about adopting alternative models without a careful consideration of local conditions. While it is important to learn from other programs, the most successful alternatives are home-grown.

Comments Regarding the Role of Different Levels of Government Offered by Group 7

While the following comments did not fit into the format of the preceding discussion, they seemed important enough to report separately.

Members of Group 7 argued that the federal, state, and local governments have unique responsibilities for dealing with the problems of at risk children. The federal government must offer more funding support for the development of appropriate interventions. Doing so may require a reallocation of funds away from military defense to the support of essential domestic programs. The federal government should also underwrite more research about effective interventions for this population. Finally, broad policy direction should be formulated at the national level.

States should refine that policy direction to fit their own circumstances and provide incentives to local districts to implement that policy. Furthermore, they should provide technical assistance and oversee the formation of statewide networks and linkages.

At the local level communities, school districts, and agencies must assume responsibility for program implementation. They should seek to coordinate the efforts of appropriate institutions and organizations. Local institutions of higher education should also become involved in the development and study of interventions for at risk children.

Group 1

Our number one priority is **early identification**. The second was **funding**. The third items is **the whole child approach**. With our number one priority, early identification, we came up with a number of points and their policy implications.

The statement from the Chief School Officers' Model Statutes has implications for Wisconsin's at risk children. The guidelines should reflect additional criteria in the plan. Second, we felt that criteria should include pre and postnatal instruction as well as nutritional education. Third, address the other agency involvement in this endeavor including social services and all the other related state agencies. Four, involve parents of at risk children in program development and instruction. Five, under the first and top priority of early identification, legislation should address highly mobile families who move into school districts. In Racine we have fourteen or fifteen hundred young people come into our district, many of them from other urban communities where the situation is the same. We felt there should be policy addressing this situation. Six, quality child care should be promoted and should be be available to parents of at risk students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged.

Child care was another important ingredient that kept popping up during our conversations. Another very important element is funding which should be available (with cost controls) in the early identification process. Number seven, a coordinated system of service should be established. Number eight, three and four year-old and prekindergarten should be a very vital part of this program. Number nine, quality preschool programs should maintain a safe environment. Ten, at risk students from preschool through graduation should be involved in a monitoring process on a one to one basis. Eleven, provide infant labs for the children of our students. Last for the first priority, is providing specific inservice training to staff who work with at risk students.

The second priority is funding. We felt that costs for early childhood education should be included in the at risk funding criteria. Second, we felt sufficient state funding should be provided for mandated programs. Third, we felt that funding for at risk programs should be provided at the same level as special education or bilingual education. Fourth, training for parents of at risk students should be included in at risk funding. Fifth, funding should be categorical so that long term planning can be effective. Seventh, multiple sources of external funding should be targeted for at risk children,

including health care. In the legislation identify who is responsible for the various needs of the program.

The last and third priority is the whole child approach. We suggest that all services of the community bear down upon the barriers to learning. We feel that collaboration and partnership are very important.

In summary, regarding early identification, we feel that at risk legislation should include the requirement to train staff who work with at risk children. The definition of at risk students should be broadened to include all children who are in danger of school failure. We also felt that legislation should require parent education programs tied in with AFDC recipients and inclusive of health care and nutrition for the parent. Also, all pertinent community agencies should be required by legislation to work together in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the children at risk plan. We also feel that at risk identification should be communicated to the receiving schools. Expanded day care for parents in financial need is critical. We also feel that legislation should require preschool as well as early childhood instruction to be provided for the at risk child. Legislation should include the developmentally appropriate early childhood programs.

Part of the funding for at risk children should be used for early childhood education. Funding must be sufficient to meet the demand or requirements as it is with special education. Funding designated for parents involvement should be provided. Provide information on available funds and be allowed access to them.

Finally, the whole child. Legislation should require agencies to identify and provide services. Funding should require collaboration. Responsibility and accountability should be assigned in the joint plan.

Group 2

Our top priority was **early identification and intervention**. We would like to see funding provided for screening opportunities to all three year-olds in the state. Create a position called, "at risk coordinator" with partial or all state funds reimbursed. We also discussed reducing the teacher/pupil ratio for preschool, kindergarten and primary. Staff development and inservices are necessary for teachers at that level. We were concerned, however, about implementing a lot of new programs unless we got new funding. We didn't want to water down the existing programs.

Our second priority was to **increase parental and community involvement** in the schools and provide more opportunity for that involvement. We encourage districts to develop partnerships with business and community agencies and support groups. We want more parental involvement in planning and service delivery, possibly requiring that parents spend a certain amount of time in the school. We need to solicit more service organization involvement and get more involvement from retired citizens. We also agreed with the Council that parents should be able to make better decisions about their children's education. We had quite a debate in our group about how that choice comes about. We had one person very in favor of the choice vis á vis "vouchers." The majority of the group was not in favor of that approach.

Our third priority was **the whole child approach**. We talked about about continual identification of children at risk, starting at least by age three and going through twelfth grade. We discussed having case managers and mentors collaborate with more social agencies in planning and implementing approaches. We recommended guidance counselors in the elementary schools all the way through the high school, health education for all three year-olds being screened and getting physical exams, parental care for mothers, parent education and staff members as "advisors" so that each student has one contact person.

Clarification of the word requirement is needed. To us it means you have to have a list of criteria that agencies would be required to meet. In this particular report you said you would require parents to spend time in the school. We are supportive of that, but what are you going to do if they don't? Do you take something away from the parent that does not come to school?

I think that we have to be careful when we include new requirements. If we say "requirement," then we imply punishment.

Group 3

The following strategies are worth considering and feel that without funding they will fall on deaf ears at the local school level. **Early childhood identification**—there needs to be a broadening of the at risk definition to include the screening process at the prekindergarten level. We recognize, however, that current statutes permit school districts to begin this if they choose. There is no reason why we cannot identify more kids if we are more liberal in how we do it. The question that we have to ask is whether we are going to insist that everyone does. We would suggest funding structures that provide allocation for testing would be worth considering. These programs should build toward teacher assistance teams and at risk teams. Perhaps contracts could be written among parents, schools and the child. The school would then have a screening referral team to plan programs for identified students. The parents should be required to physically enroll the child in the program. We need that parent commitment.

The second option was **alternative programs**. Make alternative programs available to all students who require them. We are far past asking every child to fit into the program. Therefore, we suggest providing students with a choice of schools and programs, perhaps with intra or interdistrict transfer options. Encourage social service people to facilitate rather than obstruct these activities and alternatives. Provide the "school within a school". Emphasize alternative teaching styles rather than watered down curriculum. We must put pressure on regular education to serve at risk students more productively in the regular classroom.

Our third option is the **whole child approach**; we tied it closely with parenting. Our recommendation is to emphasize the need to let the parent help the child. Provide parenting classes for the parents of all entering kindergarteners. We would also suggest credits, perhaps half a credit, for parenting and child development classes.

Our group also recommends providing support for children recovering from drug and alcohol problems. We would suggest providing services either inhouse or contracting them out. Don't limit services by requiring certifications to provide services in the schools.

Was it the conclusion of your group that there should be a change in legislation concerning at risk children?

We are not sure. We were brought into a situation in which someone else decided there was a need and had made some choices on how to meet it. Which one would you like? That is condescending.

Panel Response: Your group selected some strategies that are particularly important for all of us to examine. The building-based program approach, the alternate teaching style approach and the involvement of parents are powerful strategies and deserve a great deal of consideration by this group. I think we have to make it everybody's program, not just the at risk coordinator.

All of us who attempt to deal with this problem come at it from different perspectives and levels, whether it be the state level, the level of the school board, the legislature or the state agency. Everyone is at risk because this problem exists. The fact is we all own the program. Children at risk isn't just a local district problem or a state problem, it is all of our problem, whether we have any at

risk kids in our school system or not. Until we all understand that and begin to deal with it from that perspective, the problem will not be resolved.

Question about Funding

We would like to caution this group about funding. Some of us remember before Chapter 115, when we had 70 percent reimbursement and $22 million. Now it is suggested that funding should be watered down to 63, 57, or 55 percent.

The lesson is don't create a program based on funding. If you have the program you should have it not because of the funding, you should have it in spite of the funding. If you only have it because of the funding, you've gone down the wrong path. School boards are really shaking their heads and saying "boy, you guys really sold us a bill of goods with these handicapped kids." They are not against handicapped kids, but you promised us 70 percent. Who knows what the funding level will be in the next biennium and the next and yet we have the mandates and we buy into it. Don't go into it with the idea of getting the money. Go into it because you need the program and the kids need it. The funding is the gravy. If you look at it any other way you will be disappointed.

Group 4

Group 4 came up with three priorities, **early childhood identification, parenting, and parent involvement and school structure.** We concluded that you could pretty much just start over.

We took a look at the risk problem from a wholistic point of view and determined that our work should start at an early age and it shouldn't stop at high school. It should go beyond high school until there is participation in the mainstream of society.

We also recognize that education should not be solely accountable for the at risk problem. The community should offer incentives to generate comprehensive at risk program.

We agreed that the incentives should be of a magnitude to entice communities to get involved and participate. The community should have a strategic coordination plan to define the role of its resources and how they work together to address the problems of at risk students. This should include parental involvement, social services, local government, education, the business community, and community-based organizations.

Once the community accepts this task, they need to develop a plan to describe when, what age, by whom and what we mean by "at risk". This should be left to the local community. Provide training for teachers to refine their skills in dealing with at risk children. We also need a statewide public relations effort to let communities know what the at risk problem means to their community. The business community should also take a big role.

In the school structure we looked at developing motivating environments for students to learn and for parents to be involved. This is preferable to mandating parent participation.

Panel Response: I would disagree that we need to start over. We have one year of experience and have built a lot in that period of time. It is a building block that we can start on. However, most people are choosing early identification first, and I suspect they will continue.

We now have a unique opportunity with Governor Thompson and his links with the business community. This community has major infludence in the administration. We can help them see children at risk as an early intervention health and as an important building block for economic development. We can look at is this combination of human services and education as being one of

building blocks with the state. We need to sell this to the legislature and the business community on a level they understand. We can get a lot further this way.

Group Response: What we meant by start over is: take the philosophy beyond the educational field and use it as an economic development issue. Let's not have the educational people standing out there saying "We have a problem, please help us." Instead, "We all have a problem. Let's come up with a solution together."

Group 5

We had a diverse group that represented the entire state. We took information from the speakers, priority statements, and finally we went to the policy recommendations. We had the **whole child approach** as number one, **school curriculum instruction approach** as number two, and **early identification** as number three.

Whole child approach—We need a mandatory written interagency agreement on collaboration. That is the only way it is going to happen, and it doesn't cost money. This agreement could come through the DPI, school, or at risk program. In effect, the school is the lead agency in initiating, but once that collaboration is there, different agencies could have the lead depending on the issue. When it came to child care, it could switch to the social service agency or to another agency in your area. A mandatory written agreement would smooth this process.

We talked about the home environment and improving the life of the parent. That might mean strongly supporting legislation to raise the minimum wage. Nutrition and housing for the poor were discussed. Counselors assigned to each student or an advocate for each student needs to identify what should be provided. Broaden the definition of at risk, social skills training and programs for parents of non-English speaking. That is our list for the whole child approach.

Under school curriculum instruction approach we wanted to emphasize site-based management. We would give a building a budget and say to the principal, "It is yours. Do what you feel is necessary to develop this program." We talked about efficient use of student information and centralizing school data. We felt that sometimes there is a big lag between the time a student leaves a district and enters another school. If we have some way to get the information disseminated quickly, time would be saved in serving these students.

Alternative schools and student assistance teams were another idea. Each school would have one of these teams, including the counselor, psychologist, social worker, teacher and principal, who would meet on a weekly basis to review at risk students and their status. The K-12 developmental guidance model would be in place as part of this. We talked about mandatory parent conferencing as a board policy and some way to encourage business to release parents for teacher conferences. Maybe that would be one thing we could get from the business community.

The third area, early identification and intervention—we support daycare centers in schools for school age parents, public preschool for three- and four-year-olds who are at risk, nutrition programs for preschool children, extended daycare centers for before and after school, and finally, mandated daycare for children.

Business and industry and social service agencies will be heavily involved in this. Our only cost factor in our program was in the public preschool for three- and four-year-olds. We felt that this program should have full state reimbursement. It is currently at a 50 percent reimbursement rate for four-year olds. If we are going to make a difference, we have to get into working with at risk students at the preventive level. This is the area we would choose to fully fund.

We would like the mandatory written collaborative agreement as part of at risk policy. In terms of the definition, our definition of at risk would include three- to 21-year-olds. It would include abused, truant, dropout and delinquent, significant health problems because of the AIDS issue, AODA, school age parent, limited-English speaking, poverty, and any child who is experiencing economic related health difficulties or who experiences failure to master academic or appropriate social or emotional skills. Right now the emphasis is on academic skills or credits. Let's look at the social skills as well as the academic skills.

In terms of the 20 standards to guide school districts, we suggest a section of curriculum and instruction under the standard for at risk youth. This could be a checklist section that districts could review to determine if their plan includes critical elements needed for successful programming.

Group 6 and 8

The first of our three priorities was **funding**. The second was **alternate programs** and the third, **school curriculum instructional approaches.** Funding recommendations included increasing the funding for at risk programs 10-20 percent over the current legislation.

We wanted to broaden the at risk definition without watering down all our other efforts. But there was a strong sentiment that the early childhood population is overlooked in this process. We are interested in coming up with a way of taking this population under consideration since there is a very high portion of these kids who do not finish school. They are among the highest at risk in the schools.

There was a strong interest in school-based management. Much of what we discussed, revising the structure of schools, better case management, authority to serve kids regardless of their special needs could be shared by other agencies. We talked about collaboration and providing incentive funds for those who collaborate. One way of doing that is on a pilot basis. This is an idea that has been talked about in the mental health field. One of the agencies should be designated to receive the money, but then in a collaborative manner the other would provide the services.

I also want to add that there is a need to develop the capacity for social services and mental health to do things other than services that respond to a crisis. A lot of community-based services would be helpful for schools if done in a collaborative way. They aren't being done because of the budgets are being spent on residential care.

We talked about involving parents in the planning process and using individual teaching and learning plans. This plan would link the needs of the child with the need of the program.

Although we chose alternate programs as one of our priorities, we very definitely want to have kids served in regular education as much as possible.

In summary, we think the focus on interagency collaboration as it is reflected in the chief's document, is one that we should promote. Second, the broader definition should include the younger kids, and finally, increasing the funding is critical.

Panel Response: Many of the groups mentioned the development of alternate programs. Based on what we have had the opportunity to view there have been some outstanding programs developed in Wisconsin. We have not had much opportunity to see those work, but the fact is, the rate retention in Wisconsin is increasing each year and has for the past eight years. This is an issue local school districts and communities will continue to work hard on.

Regarding alternatives, it is very healthy look at the models developed in other communities, but in the end you have to develop alternative programs you are comfortable with and that work in the politics of your own community and school district. We need programs that people have a sense of

pride and ownership in and will implement with enthusiasm. Look at other programs and assimilate them to your local plan.

Group 7

Our group is impatient. There is a strong sense of a need for change and improvement in the existing system and money provisions, and the relationship among the parties that bear responsibility for children at risk.

There is a strong sense among our group members that there is a need for change and room to improve the existing statutes, money provisions and relationships among the various parties responsible for providing services to our youth.

We chose early identification of children at risk and intervention in their lives and the lives of their families as the most important issue. Within that area of early identification and intervention, we included parenting education as a key component. The need to help parents develop the skills to make them competent participants in the raising of their children. We also identified parent involvement in the educational process and daycare provision of services for children as a part of the early identification theme. For example, there does not appear to be a clear definition of what "quality childcare" means. We identified what we regard as the conspicuous lack of definition as far as daycare services that are appropriate for at risk children. Similarly, in the area of early childhood education, the Department of Public Instruction does not have an area of licensure that specifically addresses the kinds of educational activities or opportunities that should be provided to early age children. This is an area that needs improvement. Also, in the area of early childhood education, we noted that there was a need for a coalition or collaboration of supportive services and participants in the process.

The second item of importance is the whole child approach. We struggled for a long time over what that meant. The "whole child" means bringing to bear on the child that network of integrated services, integrated, intelligently presented. This way parents can understand the services's available to them. However, we really don't know if new services need to be provided because we are not sure what kinds of services are out there. This is a source of confusion for parents also; tapping those services and knowing what is available. We think that there is a need for an effective presentation of those services and opportunities to parents of children at risk and school officials as well.

The third theme area we have identified is a mixture of diverse elements. We ended up calling them "school-related," having to do with the structure of schools and districts, programs within a building, and the curricular offerings within classrooms. We want to emphasize within that area the need for professional staff development as well as relevant teacher preparation in postsecondary institutions. We need to help teachers better understand the strategies for involving parents in the classroom. This seems to be an area of paramount importance. We highlighted within this particular area the need for adequate school support consistent with adequate levels of pupil services personnel. We are aware of numerous schools (what could be regarded as very high risk schools) that do not have the services of counselors or social workers available. Those kinds of services should be an integral part of any school that is serving at risk children.

We also noted the importance of parent involvement. We also stressed the need for school management. The whole idea of empowering teachers and empowering administrators by giving them a sense of ownership and pride in the types of programs and successes that they achieve is critical.

With regard to the curriculum, there is a strong need to emphasize critical thinking skills and problem solving skills. In the area of self-esteem there ought to be consideration given to activities that help children develop their affective skills. Finally, in regard to making teachers and

administrators better able to understand the children they are responsible for, there is a need to effectively use the available information to describe the kinds of concerns and problems that children bring with them to the classroom. Many times teachers are left in the dark concerning the children they are there to serve.

We then took a look at the various levels of government involved in serving these children. We talked about their roles, responsibilities and various strategies. The federal government has big role to play. The area of funding is an important one and should be increased. Every effort should be made to look at the question of, "Do we need to spend as much on military items?" Reallocate some of this money to education. We look to the federal government for research on a national level and for policy direction.

At the state level, we look for policy direction in both broad and specific ways to help clarify some of the state and local goals that are addressed by state officials. We look to state government to provide funding incentives, either full funding or incentive funding categorically. We look to the state to provide technical assistance and to help establish statewide networks and linkages that provide a broad basis of support local districts can draw upon.

At the local level we look to school districts and local communities to help with specific elements of program implementation. We look at them to include as many people in that process as possible and we underscore the concept of local responsibility and the need to coordinate local networks to make these programs happen.

We identified as well the role of the University system in all of this. They should be developing models for education and actually demonstrating how those models might work. We look to the University to continue their efforts in staff development and training.

Finally, we examined the children at risk statute. The definition of children at risk should be more implicit. The statutory definition seem to address older children. We are concerned because most of our early intervention strategies miss that older child. The state's policy in that area should be strengthened. We know that there are problems of consistency in the definition of children at risk and dropouts, and for the purposes of knowing what we are all talking about we need to make those definitions more consistent. There are also loopholes in unintended incentives. Given the availability of incentive funding, that makes some people define children in different ways.

Concern for children, not funding, should be the driving force. With regard to the incentive funding itself, there are some unrealistic expectations among the five criteria for obtaining at risk funding. There should be a greater amount of funding put behind this if the state is truly interested.

We think that as the state's policymakers look at this problem of providing for the needs of at risk children, we ought to be free to consider as drastic a solution as we can. We ought to be creative and brainstorm new ways of providing for these children. But for the time being we have a reasonable base of good ideas from which to begin. We would distinguish between the need to enact policy and program implementation. We ought not become confused about these two separate tasks.

Panel Response To Group Presentations

Respondent 1—June Suhling

Throughout the presentations I heard about mandates. I listened to the discussions and realize they were an expression of frustration that all of us feel in wanting to solve a problem without the resources or the law to back us up.

The key factors are early identification and intervention. Identification doesn't do any good unless you do something about it and intervention is critically important at an early age. The "whole child

approach" can't be talked about without including parental and community involvement, It becomes an umbrella of cooperation under which you can address many of your concerns. I am supportive of interagency collaboration. I encourage it in bringing to bear the resources we already have to do the job more effectively.

Finally, staff development and training are critically important. The teacher is the critical element in what we are trying to do for at risk kids, yet we often ignore staff development and training at the postsecondary level that would help teachers address this problem. I was surprised to find out in dealing with a related issue, adult illiteracy, that we have no courses offered at state colleges and universities that help train people to work with illiterates. We can't continue the on-the-job training for our teachers. We need to assist them if they are going to do the job right.

Respondent 2—Tim Quinn

I would like to go back and comment on something I sense as these people talk about at risk children. This is not just an ownership problem, but it is a feeling we have about at risk children because of something that we did nor did not do. I would suggest that we don't have at risk kids because anyone failed to do a good job or failed to do something theyshould have done. Our schools are continually asked to do more and more with less and less, yet we continue to do a better and better job.

We have at risk children for a combination of reasons, not the least of which is the changing demographics in society. The priorities, as established by the federal government, in terms of funding at risk programs have affected the ways families cope with this restructuring. The sense of community that exists within neighborhoods has also had an impact. But the fact is, the traditional American institutions are not serving children in the same supportive ways they did when you and I had the opportunity to grow up. As a result, more and more kids grow up and come to us in an at risk condition.

Our business community should look at how well they can compete with foreign companies. It is the lesson Japan teaches very well. That is, if we are going to be successful we have to invest long term and we have to invest in our people. That investment must begin early. We need to look for a radical solution. One that came to my mind children at risk could enter the school system at an earlier age than others. Perhaps schools have to teach both parent and child. Research tells us that as adults it is rare that we change a value system developed over many years. Our values can change from time to time and they do change as a result of significant emotional experiences in our lives. I don't think there is anything more significant in the life of an adult than the birth of a child. We have a tremendous opportunity to intervene in that life by the providing better educational programs. These programs can help better understand the child, help the child better understand himself and to help make their families more successful.

Respondent 3—Al Fish

One of the main things I have learned from this is that people who are familiar with the programs for at risk youth are impatient. It is good to be impatient but we must be impatient in a more organized manner. More important we have to get other people impatient. I think that that is a source of some earlier comments about involving our communities and leaders and telling them and sharing the problems and the results of ignoring these problems.

In the Department of Health and Social Services, we are trying to work on a variety of things that address early identification, providing more family supports, and getting the school support system and social services system to work closely together. Across the state there are examples in which certain counties and school districts have taken the initiative and put together programs that wrap family support around at risk children and their families. It does us no good to have an effective school program and send the kid home at 3:30 in the afternoon to an alcoholic and abusive parent and

hope that he makes it through the night and makes it back to our effective school program. We can do a lot better job in taking advantage of the things we have learned in individual school districts and social agencies and spreading knowledge that across the state. We need to find those kids and we are trying to do that with some federal money that we have to identify infants and toddlers ages 0 to 2 and provide more and better services to them over time. That is the gap we have not addressed; hopefully this federal money will be able to close the gap.

The legislature enacted a Healthy Start program which is basically health care for the low-income working people not on AFDC. Many of them do not have health coverage. This often affects their children. Those programs proposed will provide statewide coverage for the lower income people up to 120 percent of the poverty level. Without this type of program, many people will go without coverage. There must be effective outreach to be sure they know about and get the kind of health care they need to give them a good start.

We run the welfare system in the state, that fact has been talked about a lot and has generated a lot of controversy. One of the ironies of the welfare program is that when you talk to second grade teachers you can identify at risk students easier than you can predict the weather. One of the frustrations is that you know who they are, but you can't do anything to prevent it. This is what breds so much of the impatience not only with experts, but also with the public. They really feel we can do a better job and I think that is up to us to face that issue.

As far as drastic proposals go, we have focused a lot of welfare reform on the parents—in most cases the mothers. But there are 200,000 kids on AFDC in this state; the welfare reform efforts have concentrated on providing training and employment opportunities for the mothers, and for the kids we provided daycare and medical care. This is only a piece of the problem, maybe the next stage in welfare reform is a closer relationship between families we know live in poverty and their schools to create a better link with our AFDC population. We have never really focused on this either as a school system or a welfare system.

In general, the impatience we have is justified. We know we are having problems. We need to do a better job at finding them. We need to do a better job at wrapping those kids and their families with supports on an individual basis. That means we have to do a better job of linking our social service agencies and our welfare system with our school system. That is one heck of a pile of bureaucracies. To break down that barrier we need the kind of statewide and community wide initiative that has come up in the past; the initiative that started the at risk programs, the Head Start program. We have to give people a reason to really go after some really tried and true and separate systems. I think the challenge here is not only to identify the community business leaders but to break down the barriers within each of those systems.

Respondent 4—Richard Grobschmidt

As legislators, we don't often hear from the people who are directly involved. I was pleased to see that although funding is an issue, people are willing to look at innovative ways of restructuring through interagency cooperation and the use of present funding. There are many services out there, but we are not quite sure where to find them and how to hook up with the various agencies and what they have to offer. Hopefully, the Department of Public Instruction and the legislature can work on some pilot programs to try to encourage schools and other agencies to provide services that children at risk might need.

Some of the reorientation of funding can be done through site based management programs, the alternative programs, the better use of existing programs and the consolidation of programs (AODA, truancy, etc.).

The real problem is that we have many people out there who are the working poor and the poor that want to work. That is where many of our children at risk come from. I think that we are taking some steps in the State of Wisconsin in the area of Learnfare and welfare reform, but we need to go farther into raising minimum wage, providing health care for the working poor, and providing day care so that people who want to work will have the incentive to work and provide for their families and to lessen the likelihood of having children at risk. As far as realistic hopes in the area of funding: guess over the next couple of years I wouldn't expect there would be large amounts of new money available in this area. The legislature, including the governor and the general public, have been talking about property tax relief. You may see your budgets frozen, you may see decreases over the next couple of years that will create some problems which will force you to be very innovative in providing for the needs of students at risk.

One of the areas you were talking about is the gray area of children. This is what we are really looking at, and that is expanding the area of children at risk. It is my hope to work along with Representative Krusick and look at some of the ways we may implement programs to meet the needs of the children that fall between the cracks. Hopefully we can expand our services for these children without having to need a large influx of funding which I realistically don't see happening through the state government.

Concluding Responses to Work Group Recommendations

Susan Phillips: Phillips argued for the development of flexible statutes that allow ownership at a variety of levels. She also suggested that communities must be made aware of their responsibility for all children, including those who are at risk. One of the ways businesses can demonstrate that concern is to allow their employees—both parents and nonparents—to spend more time in the schools.

June Suhling: Suhling observed that a preoccupation with new requirements and increased funding is often the product of frustration. Other factors such as early identification and intervention, parental and community involvement, interagency collaboration, and staff development and training may be more important.

Tim Quinn: Quinn suggested that we don't have at risk youth because educators have failed to do something they should have done. More children are at risk now for a variety of reasons: demographic changes, federal funding priorities, a diminished sense of community, the rapidity of change, and the fact that traditional institutions are no longer children the support they once did. As a result, more kids come to school with problems that interfere with their ability to learn. Schools, however, are now being asked to do more with less. It is essential that business leaders be convinced that adequate educational support is needed if we are to maintain a successful economy.

Al Fish: Fish argued that schools and community agencies must wrap the families of at risk children with support, and that this support must be offered even to infants and toddlers who are developmentally delayed. Mechanisms for discovering them must be developed and implemented. Noting that much welfare reform to date has focused on parents, he suggested that it may be time to consider more carefully the educational needs of children in AFDC families. Finally, he observed that implementing the reforms brought up during the preceding discussion will require breaking down what are often significant institutional barriers between one department of government and another.

Richard Grobschmidt: Speaking as a member of the Assembly, Grobschmidt cautioned conference participants not to expect increased funding over the next few years. Services will have to be improved through better coordination, site-based management, and the development of alternatives. He suggested that beneath the problem of at risk children is the fact that increasing numbers of people have joined the ranks of the working poor or the unemployed. Their condition must be

addressed through raising the minimum wage and providing adequate health care and daycare programs. Policies addressing these issues may effectively reduce the number of at risk children.

Closing—What Will Our Next Steps Be?

Victor Contrucci
Department of Public Instruction

Reading from Wisconsin Statute 118.01, Contrucci noted several presently legislated goals regarding education in the state. He asked whether the educational goals for at risk children should be the same or different, and then suggested it may be more important to ask what we should do for children rather than what they should get from the school.

Commenting next on the conference proceedings, he made several observations. First, he noted that neither educators nor professionals in social service agencies have much experience with partnership building. Such skills are more commonly found in the business community. Achieving cooperation and collaboration will require a willingness to master new skills and live with tension.

Second, he suggested that proper respect must be given to all levels of government. The setting of policy must be acknowledged as a legislative responsibility. The implementation of that policy, however, must be regarded as the proper task of people at the local level.

Third, educators and social service agency personnel must learn to live with currently existing funding levels. Increased funding will depend upon proving that they are capable of achieving better results with present allocations.

Fourth, it will be essential to determine who has the responsibility for doing what. Once this has been decided, the appropriate individuals must be given the authority to act.

Last, however difficult it may be, people involved in working with at risk youth must accept and learn to deal with the criteria of success specified by legislation.

The process of developing public policy and reaching consensus on good public policy is not an easy task, but it is a wonderful task. As we keep working within our own institutions in this state and how they will serve the citizens of this state, I am constantly amazed at what turmoil there is in the process, but how much wisdom is demonstrated at the end. Hopefully, it will move forward with good public policy. We as a Department will certainly keep you involved and continue to listen to you. Not everybody can have what they want, but everybody can win a point or two. The winners will be, if nothing else, a clarification of what our policy is going to be for at risk children in this state. I want to read something out of a statute dealing with educational goals and expectations. Neat words, right? We could talk for two days about it. "Public education is a fundamental responsibility of the state. The constitution vests in the state superintendent the supervision of public instruction and directs the legislature to provide for the establishment of district schools. The effective operation of public schools is dependent on a common understanding of what public schools should be and do. Establishing such goals and expectations is a necessary and proper compliment to the state's financial contribution to education. Each school board should provide curriculum, course requirements and instruction consistent with the goals and expectations established under sub 2. Parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in the school district share with the school and state responsibility for the pupils meeting the goals and expectation under sub 2. Educational goals, academic skills and knowledge".

Then there is a section on basic skills, analytical skills, fine arts, mathematics, natural science, knowledge in computer science, including problem solving. I talk about vocational skills as another category. "Each school board shall provide a program designed to give pupils an understanding of the

range and nature of available occupations and required skills and abilities, preparation to compete for entry level jobs, [and] positive work attitudes". There are other skills and abilities mentioned also: an appreciation and understanding of different values systems and cultures, personal development—skills needed to deal with social change, knowledge of the human body, physical education including physical fitness, knowledge of nutrition, knowledge of hygiene, sanitation, appreciation and artistic creative expression, and the ability to construct personal ethics and goals.

My question is, do we have different values and goals for at risk children? I don't have an answer to that. Should our goals for at risk children be different than the goals and purposes we set for education in this state, and do we need to be sure that there is a clear statement of what our educational goals are for that particular population. We need some goals that relate to children rather than what we expect them to get out of school. We should talk about what we are going to do for children. This role and function of schools is going to tie us back to the whole matter of responsibility, authority, and funding.

We are going to be talking a lot about collaboration. Maybe we just have to accept that we are territorial, we have tensions, and what we need to learn are the skills to get things done in spite of it. I go through neighborhoods and watch people set up their territory. Some people have no weeds. Some people have prairie grass. We are going to have to bring together the best skills of partnership building, and I am not too sure that we in education and social services have been trained in partnership building. Some of the best skills I have ever picked up in partnership building I learned from business people. When you are negotiating a million dollar deal and you don't want to screw it up, it is amazing what the intensity of the interaction is in terms of trying to reach a consensus without giving up a value system. It is my experience that business people don't have to give up their value systems to close a million dollar deal. It is just something that I, as part of this system, feel that I need to work on.

So I guess we have to live with these tensions. I think that as we try to work with other agencies, that we keep things in perspective as we look toward a broader public policy, goal setting and implementation of public policy.

I also think we should give respect to all levels of our government. We have to accept that we need to have our state make the public policy for the citizens and that we in the state who are implementers of that must have a respect for and give credence to the program policy development that takes place locally. Let me give you that differentiation. All citizens participate in public policy development, but in a particular point and time we have distinct responsibilities within our own role and function. It is necessary to keep those roles and functions straight. We should all participate in public policy making but understand that this is primarily a state function.

I see us targeting resources, and I don't know if we will make it this coming year. But I see ways to move all kinds of money now that we have to make it do more. We need to talk about the money that is over in H&SS and alcohol and drug abuse and sexual abuse clinics. We need to talk about who will get what part of the pie and somehow this mosaic will come together. Unless we can demonstrate that we are going to do better with what we've got I don't think we are going to get much of anything. If we can show we are willing to retarget money for some of the things we have talked about then I think there's a chance of getting some incentive money to help you. It is amazing what three or four thousand dollars will do for postage and things like that. Two or three thousand dollars in a local community, such as Wisconsin Rapids or Ashland, will do wonders for people. It doesn't take a lot of money, just the money that no one has found or is willing to commit and maybe we don't need a lot of money, just specific money to help people do things.

I think what I am hearing is to ask the legislature and the governor is one thing, but to expect to get all of the money we ask for is going to be difficult. I don't think we should be afraid to ask. I have never gotten anything I haven't asked for. You know how you asked for a pony when you were a kid;

how many people actually got a pony? You could ask for the pony, but you had to get the farm and a large shovel and then you may get the pony. I think we are going to have to do some real hard work sorting out responsibility and then giving people the authority to do things. I think we have the tendency to assign a lot of responsibility but we don't give people the authority to do it. We need to empower local people to do good, not just tell them to do good. I think we all are going to have to accept some criterion to measure success and profits. People are not going to keep giving us money unless we are willing to set some standard of measurement.

I was in a few back rooms when the original at risk stuff went through. At the end it was a harrowing experience. We are going to have to deal with criterion, whatever they might be. We are going to have to accept that somebody has to have the authority to monitor and censor. That is just the way it is. I think those people will be vested so that the legislature or agencies can keep enough controls on it so that it is responsible.

We look forward to getting the job done. We will share with you as we go along on what we feel the platform should be and can be. We will share with you what techniques can be applied and how we can implement those strategies. Hopefully in the end you will come to consensus with us so that when we go to the legislature there are enough of us aboard the train that people will give us the go ahead to go on down the track.

Children At Risk Statute

118.153 Children at risk. (1) In this section:

(a) "Children at risk" means dropouts, pupils who have been absent from school without acceptable excuses under s.118.15 (1) (b) to (d) or (3), pupils who are parents and pupils who have been adjudicated delinquent, who are one or more years behind their age group in the number of credits attained or in basic skill levels.

(b) "Dropout" means a child who ceased to attend school, continues to reside in the school district, does not attend a public, private or vocational, technical and adult education district school or home-based private educational program on a full-time basis, has not graduated from high school and does not have an acceptable excuse under s.118.15 (1) (b) to (d) or (3).

(2)(a) By August 15, 1986, and annually thereafter, every school board shall identify the children at risk who are enrolled in the school district and develop a plan describing how the school board will meet the needs of such children through curriculum modifications and alternative programs that meet the high school graduation requirements under s.118.33. The plan shall also describe how remedial instruction, parental involvement and pupil and community support services will be used to meet the needs of the children at risk.

(b) If in the previous school year a school district had 50 or more dropouts or a dropout rate exceeding 5% of its total high school enrollment, the school board shall submit the plan developed under par. (a) to the state superintendent for his or her approval.

(3)(a) Beginning in the 1986-87 school year:

1. Every school board shall make available to the children at risk enrolled in the school district a program for children at risk.

2. Upon request of a pupil who is a child at risk or the pupil's parent or guardian, the school board shall enroll the pupil in the program for children at risk.

(b) Programs for children at risk shall be designed to allow the pupils enrolled to meet high school graduation requirements under s.118.33.

(c) 1. The school board of a school district operating under ch.119 shall determine appropriate private, nonprofit, nonsectarian agencies located in the school district to meet the requirements under pars. (a) and (b) for the children at risk enrolled in the school district.

2. The school board may contract with the agencies described under subd. 1 for 30% of the children at risk enrolled in the school district if the school board determines that the agencies can adequately serve 30% of such children.

3. The school board shall pay each contracting agency, for each full-time equivalent pupil served by the agency, an amount equal to at least 80% of the average per pupil cost for the school district.

(4)(a) Beginning in August 1987, and annually thereafter, the school board of every school district whose plan was approved under sub. (2) (b) in the previous school year shall submit a report to the state superintendent. The report shall include information on the school district's attendance, retention and high school graduation rates for pupils enrolled in a program for children at risk and the percentage of pupils enrolled in a program for children at risk who received academic credit in the previous school year.

(b) 1. If upon receipt of a school board's annual report under par. (a) the state superintendent determines that any 3 of the conditions listed under par. (c) existed in the school district in the previous school year, the school district shall receive from the appropriation under s.20.255(2) (ac), for each pupil enrolled in the school district's program for children at risk, additional state aid in an amount equal to 10% of the school district's average per pupil aids provided under s.20.255(2)(ac), (an), in the previous school year.

(c) 1. The school district's average attendance rate for pupils enrolled in the school district's program for children at risk was at least 70%.

2. The school district's retention rate for pupils enrolled in the school district's program for children at risk was at least 70%.

3. At least 70% of the pupils enrolled in the school district's program for children at risk as high school seniors received a high school diploma.

4. At least 70% of the pupils enrolled in the school district's program for children at risk received academic credit.

5. The school district's program for children at risk can show, on average, at least one month of improvement in reading and mathematics performance for each month of instruction.

(5) The school board of a school district receiving additional state aid under sub.(4)(b) 1 shall use the additional funds received for meeting the requirements under subs.(2)(a) and (3).

(6) Annually, the legislative audit bureau shall audit school district eligibility, performance criteria and state aid payments under this section.

(7) The state superintendent shall promulgate rules to implement and administer this section. The rules shall not be overly restrictive in defining approved programs and shall not serve to exclude programs that have demonstrated success in meeting the needs of children at risk.

Section note: 1985 Act 29; 1985 Act 29 s.3203 (43) (c) provides that sub. (4) (b) first applies to aids paid in the 1987-88 school year based upon 1986-87 school year enrollment and school aid data.